

AL-11888
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Winter 2008

The making of **Me**

Scratch the surface

Four friends
yak about
looks 'n' first
impressions

Find your thing

Start the search
for your passion

Plus! Ashley Bart speeds, The boat is sinking,

Top 10 school
stereotypes, **Why
volunteer?**

Sorority Song: The Vissia Sisters talk family and music

This man is going to tell you how to deal with your life?

OK,

the only people who may know

SOMETHING

about what's going ON in your LIFE would be other TEENS and then, ONLY if they hang out with you and SOMETIMES that's not even the case,

especially when your

FRIENDS are completely

OUT TO LUNCH

and some of your PROBLEMS are very SERIOUS. So why don't you get OFF your BUTT and WRITE something yourself? You could get PUBLISHED, it may make you FAMOUS and then you can have your own PERFUME or something just as LAME, but it will make you MILLIONS.

Grip. It's your life. Grab it.

Grip magazine is currently seeking writers, illustrators, animators, poets – creative types of all kinds – between the ages of 13 and 18. Articles, poetry, short stories, illustrations, comic strips and photography will be considered. Send questions and samples to creative@griponlife.ca. You will be paid. Really. Not a lot, but it's still money.

griponlife.ca



what's inside FEATURES

Why I volunteer (p 6);
A sinking feeling (p 16);
PLUS: Top 10 school stereotypes (p 19)

Find out what makes "me"

I'll Show You All

The geek always wins in the movies. Too bad it isn't always that way in real life BY SCAACHI KOUL

Depression Expressions

I ended up in the psych ward. That's where I learned that I had the power to make the most of my treatment BY JENNA

Scream King

Matt Acosta has a thing for blood and gore. And he's trying to spread the joy BY LACEY MORRIS

Quiz: Body Mine

Find out what you really think of your bod. You might be surprised BY NADIA FATAH

Body Beautiful

Read about looks, first impressions and which is easier: being a boy or a girl BY ROSY LEE, VIVIAN LEE, JACKSON TSE AND SCAACHI KOUL

Find Your Thing

Some kids have obvious gifts. The rest of us have to look harder BY ALLISON MCPHAIL

Lady, lady! Are You OK?

What happens when mental health meets first aid?

Fitting In

A teen rejects labels as she forges her own way, in school and at home BY COURTNEY FORD

Telling Two Sides

If teens can't legally vote, get married or drive, can a 13-year-old be convicted of murder? BY SAMANTHA MARCELLIN AND BHUVANA SANKARANARAYANAN

Talk Money

Find out how to save money, manage money and even learn a bit about investment BY JESSICA BILLINGSLEY

DEPARTMENTS

Message from the Youth Advisory Council; word from the AMHB; meet some of our contributors

it Happens Should you see *The Golden Compass*? Check in with *Grip*'s reviews; Find out why volunteering is good for you; Your body, by the numbers; Read our wall; Don't play a fun-less "game"

Help Wanted "Help! My mom wants me to see a psychologist!" and other quandaries and questions for our experts

Accolades Meet some of the winners from the first annual *Grip X-Press Awards*. Cash! Prizes! Prestige!

COMIC: Dodge – Sonny wants to get pierced. Find out what his fossils have to say about it BY ERIC GRAVEL

The Last Word Life in the Fruit Bowl BY PAIGE PARSONS

Fan Fare: The Vissia Sisters

Meet three teen siblings from Stony Plain who are catching the ears of fans and critics in Alberta and abroad BY SHELLEY ASTILL

It Happened To Me

Death of a loved one is part of life, but that doesn't make it any easier BY LISA OSTROWSKI

This is Ashley Bart

She puts the pedal to the metal, going where most teenage girls don't: behind the wheel on a racetrack BY STEPHANIE SMITH

18 Ways to Feel Good

Nobody can do it for you – you're responsible for your own self-esteem. Feel great now BY ALLISON MCPHAIL



A Message from the Youth Advisory Council

Drawing away from peer pressure and parents' bickering, it's time for the making of me, but who is this "me"? Am I created by fashion, music, body image and what everyone else says I should be? This issue of *Grip* examines just these types of questions, looking at how we identify ourselves.

Grip contributors give insight into this topic, which seems to hold down everyone at some point. In these pages, there are stories about how they found their thing, created their own self-image and rejected labels. There are essays, rants and games. They all shed light on teenage life and the main question that it revolves around.

Me, I'm an elder member of the Youth Advisory Council, and I can say that it wasn't an easy task to step back from my life and realize that there is this self-image that I've built over time. My life has consisted of trial and error, both of which I have learned from. But there's no point in holding on to the past. It cannot be altered once it's finished, but you can learn from it and use that knowledge for the future.

I recall the days when I used to hide behind a mask that people thought was me, simply to be able to fit in. And I have to say that that it's perhaps my biggest regret, forming a self-image based on peer pressure. Once I learned to move away from that, and found my true self, my own identity, I've been all the better for it. Struggles still lie ahead, but with my renewed confidence, I know I can make it.

The Youth Advisory Council would like to take a moment and thank the contributors to the fifth issue of *Grip*, and thank all our readers. If you'd like to contribute to our next issue, please visit our website. Our magazine is for teens, by teens, so please feel free to tell us your stories. They're what make you unique.

Terilyn Pott

Grip Youth Advisory Council

A Message from the Alberta Mental Health Board

Late last year, I earned my PhD in Public Health Sciences. One of the subject areas I studied was epidemiology.

Epidemiology isn't the study of bugs (that's entomology) nor the study of the skin (that's dermatology). It's the study of factors that affect the health and illness of populations. I'm sure you're on the edge of your seat with excitement!

I've discovered that getting a doctorate is like other accomplishments in life, such as when you get your high school diploma or your driver's licence. On one hand, you feel a bit different, but on the other, you're still the same person. You still go to school or work, spend time with family and grab breakfast at McDonald's.

How has my doctorate changed how others think of me? How has it changed how I view myself? Do other people wonder if they should call me "doctor"? Do I want to be called "doctor"?

The theme of this issue is all about how you perceive yourself and how others perceive you, and how these perceptions shape the person you are and will become.

Flip inside to hear from a teen who turned a geeky hobby into a great little film festival. Read about a teen who says battling depression helped her find herself. And why does the movie plot where the nerdy underdog comes out on top appeal to us so much?

Also inside is information about the recipients of our first annual ***Grip X-Press Awards***. Thanks to everyone who submitted an entry, and for sharing themselves through writing, illustrations, or photography.

Sometimes, we jump on the bandwagon to be part of the crowd. Other times, we blaze our own trail. And then, there are times when we're not sure what to do.

Decisions about whether we're part of – or apart from – the crowd build character. The making of yourself is not a destination, it's a journey.

Enjoy the ride!

Dr. Ray Block

President and CEO

Alberta Mental Health Board

We're looking for applications from teens to be members of our youth advisory council for future issues of our magazine. Visit gripnlife.ca for details.

grip

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Contributors



An Aquarius, it's no surprise **Sam Marcellin** loves water. If she were a fruit, she'd be a kiwi because she's soft on the outside, but bright and colourful on the inside. She loves pulling out her Ibanez Soundgear and rocking out to Iron Maiden with her big brother. She has a bunch of close friends, and who wouldn't love a kiwi fruit who plays bass?

When **Jackson Tse** grows up, he hopes to live someplace hot. He's colour-blind, so he doesn't really have a favourite colour. Jackson says that the best part of his school is the students. His favourite subject is gym 'cause it's the only class where you get great marks just for playing games. Who could ask for more?



Grace Gundy wants to become a SWAT cop when she grows up. If she were a colour she'd be a rich green. "It's not obnoxious but it gets noticed," she says. She likes school because her school has tons of spirit. Grace loves volleyball so she figures that means she's athletic and that she loves a challenge. Look out world.

Givin' it back

By Allison McPhail

Since Grade 7, I've clocked a few hundred hours volunteering at several organizations. Friends often ask why I prefer this to a paying job, and I've provided various answers over the years. Truthfully, there isn't one particular reason I give up so much of my time; it's a combination of factors.

For one thing, it gives me a chance to learn and do

Robot Doc

In the future, some surgeries may be performed by a member of the da Vinci family. No offense to the descendants of the 15th century mathematician, artist and inventor, but we're talking about a surgery-performing robot.

Called the da Vinci S, it looks a bit like a mechanical bug, with one arm designed to hold a camera and the other three to wield surgical instruments. The surgeon operates the machine while seated at a console, looking at a 3-D image of the patient's body. She grasps controls below the display screen, and the robot follows her movements seamlessly inside the patient.

The California-based company that designed the robot, Intuitive Surgical, sold one to Edmonton's Capital Health for a cool \$4 million this summer and planned on putting it to work this fall at the Royal Alexandra Hospital. Initially, the robot will be used for surgical treatment of prostate cancer. Capital Health officials hope to put it to work in pediatric, thoracic, cardiac and general surgery. Here's hoping the da Vinci robot's bedside manner is better than any Cylon's.

Yuk It Up

Did you know that laughter really is good medicine? And that there's such a thing as a laughter coach? Some people believe yukking it up can help them cope with hardship and stress. It's not as weird as it sounds; there have actually been studies done on the benefits of a good one-liner before surgery or during hard times.

- **Need a laugh?** A good giggle appears to tell the immune system to "kick it up." Laughter causes an increase in the number and activity level of natural killer cells that attack cells infected with a virus, and some types of cancerous cells.
- **Got a cold?** Laughing stimulates an increase in the antibodies, which can fight upper respiratory tract infections.
- **How's that infected hangnail?** Laughing will create more antibodies to pierce dysfunctional or infected cells.
- **Is it exam time?** Laughter decreases stress hormones that constrict blood vessels and suppress the immune system.
- **Wanna shed a few pounds?** Laughing provides a workout for the diaphragm, and increases the body's ability to use oxygen. A good belly laugh is like taking your heart and stomach jogging.
- **Are you broke?** Laughter is free, and — unless you have a really annoying laugh — has no known negative side effects.
- **But hang on!** Laughter is not a cure for serious mental health disorders. More than 27,337 Albertans aged 12 to 18 visited physicians for mental health concerns over the past two years. If you feel you need help, join their ranks and talk to someone.

Source: www.laughtmonster.com

PHOTOGRAPH FROM CAPITAL HEALTH'S YOUR HEALTH MAGAZINE

things I wouldn't be able to any other way: things like trail guiding for a B.C. stable, operating radio equipment at The Aerospace Museum in Calgary, coaching archery and working stage lights at the Loose Moose Theatre.

There are also the benefits to consider, such as days of working alongside horses, or free shows and classes, as well as stage time at the Loose Moose. Of course,

volunteering is also great on the resume and in scholarship applications, and can be a great way to make useful contacts in a variety of fields. In the end, however, the thing that makes the hectic schedule and lack of cash worth it, is that volunteering is just plain fun. Give it a try and find out for yourself!



Read for Your Life

Reading a lot may just save your life. A U.S. study published in December 2007 showed that elderly people who can't read have a greater chance of dying sooner. Published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, the study investigated 3,260 U.S. patients over 65 who were on Medicare. Researchers found that older adults with low literacy levels had a 50 per cent higher mortality rate compared to seniors with better literacy skills. Even the lead author, Dr. David Baker, who worked on the study with his colleagues from Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine, said in a news release that he was shocked by the results.

The study showed that a low level of literacy was the top predictor of mortality, after smoking. Researchers believe the cause is not the lack of reading itself, but the fact that illiterate people have less knowledge of what a chronic disease is, don't take their medications properly and don't take care of themselves as well.

Here's the red flag for Canadians: according to the 2005 Adult Literacy and Life Skills survey by Statistics Canada and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 40 per cent of Canadians aged 16 to 65 struggle with low literacy. A trip to the library is more than a good idea; it's an investment in your health.

The Game

By Caitlin Hart

It was a lonely start to the school year. Then, in October, I was invited by an acquaintance to hang out with her and her group at lunch. My delight surpassed excitement – I was wanted in a group! I no longer needed to bury my head in a book in the back of the library. It sounded amazing, but it wasn't. As my mom would say, "it's all fun and games until someone loses their eye." Or in my case, their innocence.

One of the girls in the group suggested we play a game. I thought of soccer or kick-the-can, though it was quite different. They started to take turns lighting the dry grass at the edge of the school yard where it ran alongside an alley. Then they'd chase the fire and stomp it out. As the "game" started, I knew I should leave. Fear of being hated saturated me, however, and I simply stood there and watched.

As we were walking back to school, our vice-principal showed up, screamed at us to empty our pockets. We did, but I was in tears the entire time. I kept crying all the way back to school and through the phone call he made to my mom, telling her I was suspended for three days. A woman had seen our "game" in the alley.

I wanted to rip my skin off out of frustration. How come my mom and the vice-principal thought I was involved? As they explained it, I didn't do anything about it and that was enough for suspension.

I'm embarrassed that I didn't protest, or leave, when "the game" started. Now I know it comes down to me putting my dignity before fitting in. Everyone tries to stick you in a box and slap on a label. Take a stand. It's up to you. Make your label read: "ME."

Retreat From Apathy

Interest in politics among Canadian youths is at an all-time low. Voter apathy is up, and turnout is down. This can't be good. Maybe if parliamentary debates were the least bit comprehensible, kids would tune in instead of turning off. Cure your apathy by memorizing the following terms before you turn 18:

1. A back bencher is:

- a) A softball player with a sore back
- b) A woodworker who makes benches
- c) A member of the provincial or federal legislature, who doesn't hold a position in cabinet or isn't given much public say in their party. These MLAs or MPs most often sit in the back benches of parliament. Most politicians try to get an important cabinet position within government.

2. Caucus is:

- a) A relative of the cactus.
- b) The secret language of crows.
- c) A general meeting of elected members of a political party. It can also refer to a subgroup of members from a particular region, or a closed-door meeting of these members.

3. A bill is:

- a) Your uncle, no, wait – that's Bob.
- b) What you owe for that burger and fries.
- c) A proposed law, introduced within a legislature. Once a bill becomes a law, it is called an "act." Bills originate either from a minister or are submitted by a MP or MLA who is not a member of cabinet.

4. Bicameralism is:

- a) A person who owns two cameras.
- b) The practice of naming all the members of your family "Cameron."
- c) The practice of having two separate legislative or parliamentary chambers. Most democratic governments have one chamber to represent population density, while the other chamber tries to give some sort of representation to the regions. In Canada, provinces with the highest populations get the most seats in the House of Commons. The Senate is an attempt at regional representation.



ANSWERS: In case you haven't figured it out, the answers to this quiz are all C's. If you answered anything else for any of the questions, please go back to Grade 7, do not pass go and do not collect \$200.

Body By The Numbers

It takes **14** muscles to smile and **43** to frown.

When you sneeze, air rushes through your nose at a rate of **160 km/h.**

Most people shed **16 kilograms** of skin in a lifetime. That's about the weight of a **six-year-old child.**

During puberty, your body will grow faster than at any other time in your life, except for when you were a baby.

The small intestines are nearly eight metres long. Your brain sends messages at the rate of nearly **390 km/h.**

By Megan Ryland

Sugar and Spice, and Everything Nice?

The movie *Mean Girls* made clear to the world what every girl already knows: the so-called fairer sex isn't so fair. In fact, girls (and boys) can be catty and downright cruel. This isn't news, but the trend in teen fiction that is capitalizing on this idea and delving into the complex realms of female misbehaviour is new. From Judy Blume's novels to *Sweet Valley High*, it was clear that fictional girls

weren't exactly angelic. Slowly, however, we're sliding towards the extremes of teenage experience, popularizing high-class riches and labels, endless cat fights, wild parties, and life-changing decisions made in split seconds. Compare *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* by Ann Brashare and the *Gossip Girl* series by Cecily von Ziegesar. These newer books aren't the average coming-of-age or friendship stories; they're *Girl World* on steroids.

"This is a case of art imitating life," says James Harding, an employee at the Signal Hill Indigo in Calgary. He believes that the popularity of the books reflects the attitudes of readers. He may be right.

"Girls are like that," 11th grader Kayla Smith says of the characters in the book. And while other teens may disagree, saying that no one really lives like the girls in these novels, it's clear that readers feel an affinity for the stories. It's no surprise that girls enjoy reading

about things that they'll never do, revenge they'll never get, or clothes they'll never wear. Reading is often about escapism, about fantasy worlds and characters, not reality. It's hard to resist the thrill of these larger-than-life novels. Exclusive cliques, parties, and scandals are painted in vivid colour, and girls can read all about it from the comfort of their bedrooms, like the longest issue of their favourite tabloid.

The popularity of these books also makes sense when you take into account what's playing on MTV. It's not hard to guess that the same girls who are watching shows like *The Hills* are reading books with a similar focus.

Nice, they are not, but gossip is rarely this juicy, and teenagers are eating it up. Publishers are giving girls what they want because, while a lot of the characters in the series aren't exactly positive role models, girls love to read about them. Whether this is a trend that's here to stay or not is still up for debate.

The strongest muscle
of the body is the
masseter muscle
in the jaw.

You blink your
eyes about
20,000
times a day,
and your heart
beats about
100,000
times a day.

Each of your eyes
has **120 million rods**,
which help you see in black and white.
Six million cones in your eyes
help you see in color.

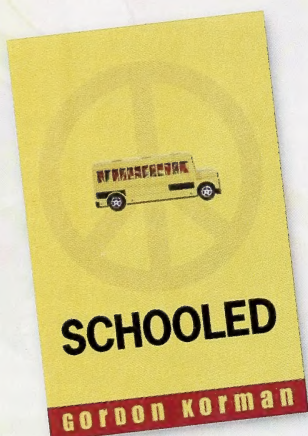
Placed end to end,
all your body's
blood vessels
would stretch close to
100,000 km.

We breathe
20 times
per minute,
more than **10 million**
times per year
and about
700 million
times in a lifetime.



Turn off the Tube

There's a TV writers' strike.
Hit the book shelves and let your
brain do the entertaining



Schooled by Gordon Korman

REVIEWED BY KRISTINA FITHERN-STIELE

Capricorn Anderson isn't exactly a normal kid. What with his long blond Sasquatch hair, tie-dyed T-shirts and corn husk shoes, he looks like he's stepped out of the 1960s. Cap has

never watched TV and he's never had pizza. Since he was born, he's lived on a hippie commune with his grandmother, Rain.

When Rain is seriously injured and has to go to the hospital, Capricorn is forced to move in with a social worker and her extremely temperamental teenage daughter, Sophie. While Cap might know a lot about Tai Chi and preparing the winter harvest, he's not all that experienced when it comes to the basics of surviving middle school.

And now, thanks to the self-proclaimed big man on campus, Zach Powers, Cap is in for a couple of rough weeks as he has been chosen for a Claverage tradition: the biggest weirdo in school gets nominated for class president and wins, no matter what!

Grade: B *You'll definitely be rooting for Cap throughout the book as he prevails, despite being the brunt of many middle school pranks.*

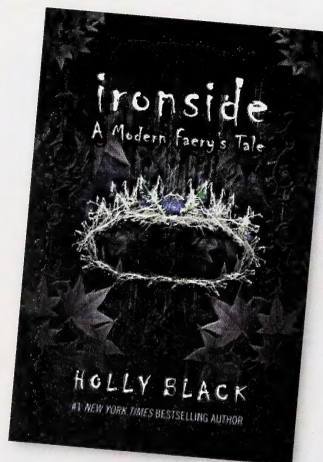
Ironside: A Modern Faery's Tale

By Holly Black

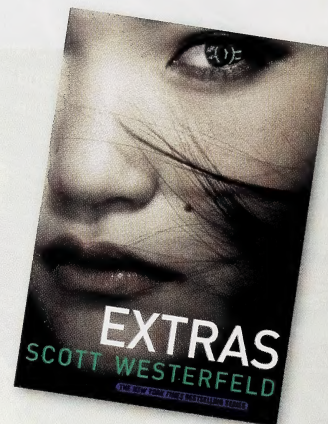
REVIEWED BY CAITLIN HART

This intriguing novel takes you through the trials and tribulations of a modern teenage faery named Kaye. She attends the coronation of her boyfriend, Roiben, as the king of Unseelie Court. He sends her on a difficult quest: to find a faery who's also a liar. To complicate matters, the evil queen of Seelie wants Robien's throne for herself. And then there's Kaye's own secret: she's a changeling – a faery who has been substituted for a human child at birth. She's determined to take the human Kaye back to her mother.

Through the course of the book, Kaye goes on countless adventures. *Ironside* is the third and last in Black's fantasy series, but the book can easily stand on its own. Set in a modern world, this is a gripping read, cover to cover.



Grade: A- *Although this book is spellbinding at first, there seems to be something missing towards the end. A great read nonetheless.*



The Extras by Scott Westerfeld

REVIEWED BY MEGAN RYLAND

Fame is everything in Scott Westerfeld's newest novel, *Extras*. The fourth book in the *Uglies* "trilogy" takes the world of Tally Youngblood – the heroine of the last three novels – and transplants it to Japan. In *Extras*, the stakes are higher, the technology is more advanced, the slang is cooler and we meet a great new cast of characters. Fifteen-year-old Aya Fuse would do anything to up her "face rank" (the all-important measure of celebrity in her city), including infiltrate an ultra-secret clique called the Sly Girls, just so she can expose them.

With help from her older brother, Hiro, and his best friend, Ren, not to mention her flying video camera, Moggle, Aya learns to surf underground trains and tells more than a few white lies to get the story that will make her famous. However, things get a little too exciting when Aya and the other Sly Girls discover a secret that threatens their entire city. Joined by Frizz Muzino, a boy who practices Radical Honesty, and a few old friends, Aya embarks on the most epic adventure of the series. The only sure thing? Once it's over, everyone is going to know her name.

Grade: A+ *Fans of the Uglies series will welcome this epic addition and will leave readers new to the series scrambling to read more about this alternate universe.*

Must-See Movies

Make a beeline for the best bets and beware of the bombs



August Rush

REVIEWED BY GRACE GRUNDY

Filled with toe-tapping music, convincing actors and creative plot, *August Rush* is a heartfelt movie. Directed by Kirsten Sheridan and starring Freddie Highmore, Keri Russell and Jonathan Rhys Meyers, this movie displays life's unexpected events, auspicious and unfortunate. Lyla Novacek (Russell) is an accomplished cellist who meets a gifted guitar player, Louis Connelly (Rhys Meyers). After a romantic night, young Lyla learns she's pregnant but her father prevents her from seeing Connelly again. A car crash puts Novacek and her unborn baby in jeopardy and she is told, untruthfully, that her baby didn't survive.

Eleven years later, we meet Lyla's son, Evan Taylor (Highmore), an orphan with a head full of music. Eventually, Evan and his birth parents connect after anxiety, uncertainty and hardship.

August Rush sends the message that without passion, love can't exist. Although somewhat predictable, a few twists in the plot prevent it from becoming dull. This movie is suitable for ages 10 and up.

Grade: A If for no other reason, see the movie to watch rising star Freddie Highmore, pictured above, prove his remarkable talent.

Dan in Real Life

REVIEWED BY LISA OSTROWSKI

In recent years, Steve Carell has proven himself to be a versatile actor. His resume includes comedies for adults and several films aimed at the younger generation. His latest film, *Dan in Real Life*, appeals to families. Carell is Dan Burns, a single father struggling to get back into the dating scene after the death of his wife. At a local bookstore, Dan meets a woman named Marie (Juliette Binoche) and begins to fall in love with her.

Unfortunately, Marie is his brother's new girlfriend. This film is filled with plenty of awkward moments for Dan: his mother sets him up on dates and his kids witness him trying to flirt. Dan comes across as charming and awkward; he's the type of person you might find living next door; an average, but likable man. *Dan in Real Life* is an entertaining film for the entire family.

Grade: B Or 3.5 stars out of 5, or 1.25 thumbs up. Whichever works.



The Golden Compass

REVIEWED BY PAIGE PARSONS

Adapted from the book by Phillip Pullman, *The Golden Compass* is an impressive fusion of visual effects and performances by Nicole Kidman, Sam Elliot, and newcomer Dakota Blue Richards, as heroine Lyra. The story begins in an alternate universe where each person is accompanied by a daemon, an animal manifestation of the person's soul. Lyra and her daemon begin to discover secrets about a mysterious substance called dust. She learns that the Magisterium, a formidable organization trying to destroy all knowledge of this dust, is also involved in a terrible scheme that involves kidnapping children and experimenting on them.

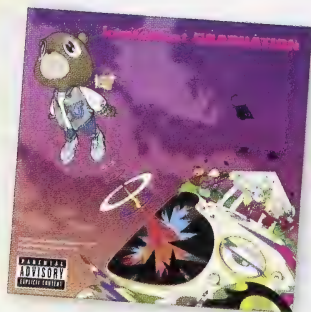
Once in possession of the last existing alethiometer (a golden compass), Lyra is thrown into a whirlwind of action as she battles the evil Mrs. Coulter, travels with Gyptians to the North, befriends an armored bear, and attempts to rescue her best friend from the Magisterium's secret lab.

Grade: A This film is exciting and thought-provoking. It drives home a message about the dangers of conformity. The plot is intricate and easier to follow if you've read the novel.



Ears Open

Read all about some recent releases and find out if you should be laying down cash for these tunes



Graduation by Kanye West,
Roc-A-Fella Records

REVIEWED BY IBRAHIM ANWAR

This is the follow-up to *Late Registration* and the self-described Louis Vuitton Don's third album. This album is proof that Kanye is one the best MCs of our time with rhymes like /Hey Mona Lisa, come home you know you can't Rome without Caesar/, *Graduation* doesn't lack Kanye's creative humor.

The samples on this CD are the freshest I have heard in a minute. From collaborating with Chris Martin from Coldplay, to one of the best written songs on the album, "Big Brother,"

which addresses his mentor Jay-Z, Kanye keeps it fresh.

Producing 99 per cent of the album, Kanye has certainly backed up all his arrogance and cockiness. The album art work was created by the pop art king, Takashi Murakami. Kanye claimed that the artwork for the CD would be worth lots of money and buying the CD was like an investment.

Grade: A+ Without a doubt, this CD is a real good look if you're into inventive beats and poetic rap schemes.

Finding Forever by Common
G.O.O.D music/Geffen Records

REVIEWED BY IBRAHIM ANWAR

Common, also known as Common Sense, released his seventh CD, *Finding Forever*, in summer 2007.

This record's real hot. A lot of Common fans thought *Finding Forever* was just a part two of *Be*, his sixth album, which came out in 2005. Common's really sticking with his roots with his amazing flow and his intelligent lyrics. Kanye produced 80 per cent of the CD, but for y'all Common fans, he hasn't forgot about his big

homie, J Dilla, who produced numerous Common tracks in the past. J Dilla died of cardiac arrest in early 2006, but first he produced two tracks on *Finding Forever*.

It's hard to find a CD that could really top Common's vision for *Finding Forever*. Common also accurately claimed to be "Chi-town's Nas" — Chicago's Nas, a notorious rapper from NYC.

He's clarified that he's a man for the people, the struggle, equality, everything an MC should be about. Common raps: Visions realized/ music affection lives/ a gift from the skies/ to be recognized/ I'm keepin' my eyes/ on the



people — that's the prize. With lyrics like these, Common is not afraid to put these one-hit rappers to shame.

Grade: A+ If you wanna hear real raw rap, this album should be in the dictionary next to the definition of hip-hop.



As I Am by Alicia Keys
J Records

REVIEWED BY GRIP STAFF

This is the third CD of New Yorker Alicia Keys and it shows her stepping out of her comfort zone a little.

She still has the great R&B sound that launched her into the mainstream, but on *As I Am*, Keys ventures out into the land of pop.

Maybe she goes a little too far, because she comes off sounding a bit too sentimental, even goofy, on tracks such as "Superwoman." The good news is: most of this release is pretty good. And it shows that she's not satisfied doing the same-old, same-old.

Grade: B+ Alicia is reinventing herself. Tracks such as "Like You'll Never See Me Again" say she could be a true pop diva.

Ought To Be In Pictures

Three reviews of news and faves in the world of pictures and words

Land of the Blindfolded

By Sakura Tsukuba

REVIEWED BY TERESA KWON

How would you feel if you were able to see the future or past of people you touch or bump into? In the *Land of the Blindfolded*, sometimes it happens to a high school girl named Kanade Outsuka. She meets a guy named Arou Naitou, who can see the past, and Namiki Masahiro, who can see the future. But society doesn't accept their unusual abilities. People who learn about their secrets react in different ways. Sometimes the three are rejected, excluded from society, or preyed upon by certain people who take advantage of their abilities.

Land of the Blindfolded is a series of novels that grabs our attention. The books are difficult to put down. Sometimes characters clash about whether or not to help people. Kanade argues that her gift may be given to help people in order to save them from injury, or even death. Namiki argues that it's useless to help people who do not accept the trio's abilities. Sakura Tsukuba tries her best to blend her characters into real high school life. She uses elegant pen techniques to manifest personal characteristics.

Grade: A- *It's interesting to see how each character develops as you read each chapter, although most events seem to be similar.*



Fruits Basket Vol. 1

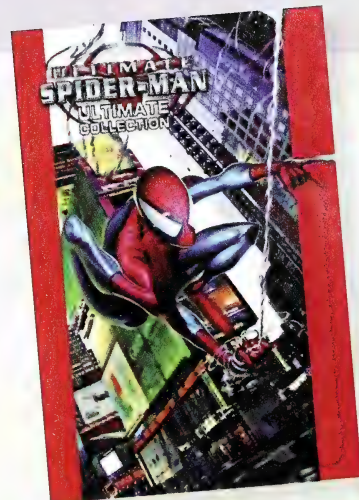
By Natsuki Takaya

REVIEWED BY BHUVANA SANKARANARAYANAN

When the orphaned and homeless Tohru Honda is asked to stay at the home of the school's coolest boy, she gladly accepts what she believes to be the chance of a lifetime. However, less than a day later, she learns of the curse haunting the boy's family, the majestic Sohma family – whenever they are hugged by a member of the opposite sex, they turn into animals from the Chinese zodiac. However, the curse runs deeper still, subtly affecting each member of the Sohma family in dark ways. Isolated, hurt, and lost, the Sohma family relies on Tohru to heal them mentally, even as she struggles to cope with her own mother's death.

The graphic novel itself is illustrated beautifully, with many amusing comments on the side. The preservation of many Japanese characteristics of the novel (for example, you start on the right side of the page and move to the left) adds extra depth to the graphic novel and makes it more interesting.

Grade: A+ *This is a touching, heart-warming and amusing tale, suitable for everyone.*



Ultimate Spider-Man Volume 1: Power and Responsibility

By Bill Jemas, Brian Michael Bendis and Mark Bagley

REVIEWED BY KRISTINA FITHERN-STIELE

Unless you've been living in a cave for the past 40 years, you know about nerdy teenager Peter Parker, his radioactive spider bite and the creation of his alter ego, Spider-Man. But Spider-Man, an age-old icon of the comic book world, is getting a brand new lease on life. *Ultimate Spider-Man* is a hero for the new millennium. All the familiar characters from the original script are here, but they're getting a makeover in the *Ultimate Marvel World*. Every old story has a new twist that will leave you to wonder what's going to happen next.

Even Spider-Man's origins are twisted in this new story and you'll really be shocked by the new Green Goblin. Spidey fans will be thrilled by the tornado of power Bendis, Jemas and Bagley have breathed into this new world of Spider-Man.

Grade: A+ *A collection of Ultimate Spider-Man #1-7. Great artwork from Bagley (Thunderbolts, Amazing Spider-Man) and superb storytelling by Bendis (Alias, Powers)*

Play Nice!

They say gaming is good for your hand-eye coordination. Better practice more

REVIEWED BY GRAYSON EVANS



Game: *Half Life 2*
Platform: PC, Xbox, Xbox 360

Rated: M for mature
The first *Half Life* was groundbreaking and all about the story. The player (as scientist Gordon Freeman) battled alien invaders arriving through an interplanetary portal.

In *Half Life 2*, the story puts Gordon Freeman in the middle of a war between the Combine, a highly-advanced alien empire that has enslaved the Earth, and the Rebels, humans fighting back. But this sequel isn't about the story; it's about the great gameplay. This game features one of the best game engines ever; it has very smart artificial intelligence, and one of the most innovative weapons in gaming history; the gravity gun. This gun uses anything, and I mean ANYTHING, as ammunition, such as grenades, tables and computer monitors.

Hint: In zombie-infested Ravenholm, use all the traps in your sight to conserve ammunition.

Grade: **A+** Great gameplay, but it's odd that the story isn't as important as in the first *Half Life*.



Game: *Mario Galaxy*
Platform: Nintendo Wii
Rated: E for everyone

Everybody knows the Mario stories: Bowser kidnaps Princess Peach and Mario has to save her. But this time the chase takes Mario to outer space. This game has a great gravity system, which makes the gameplay

perfect. Each planet has a different gravity, which keeps things interesting. The best part of the game is the multitude of levels, from flying around planets to running through side-strolling craters.

The controls do have motion controls, but there aren't a lot of motions you end up using. Overall this is a great game for Wii. I recommend it for anyone who loves Mario.

Hint: Fire Mario is still here, but new powers include Bee Mario, buzzing off, and Boo Mario, floating right through stuff.

Grade: **B+** You have to get used to the camera, especially in space. Some players say they feel motion sick.

Off the Wall

THE BLUES

Everyone is sad sometimes. Sadness is different from depression. If you have depression, you'll feel sad or miserable most of the time and you'll find it hard to cope. If the following symptoms last two weeks or longer, you may be experiencing depression. Talk to your parents, school counsellor or family doctor.

FEELINGS

- Intense sadness that does not go away
- Loss of interest in things that you used to like
- Feeling hopeless
- Feeling helpless
- Feeling irritable and angry

THOUGHTS

- Less confidence or low self-esteem
- More trouble than usual making decisions
- Thoughts of death or suicide

BEHAVIOUR

- Crying easily and often
- Avoiding friends and family
- Not keeping up personal appearance
- Neglecting responsibilities like school assignments, chores and work

PHYSICAL

- Low energy
- Walking and talking very slowly
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Eating too much or too little

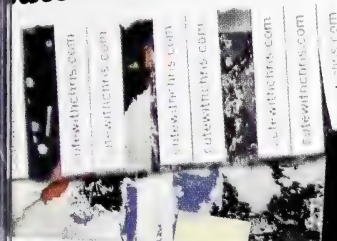
READ THIS
THE WORLD WITHOUT US
by Alan Weisman

It tells what would happen to all our stuff if there were suddenly no more humans. The website has an interactive timeline:
www.worldwithoutus.com/did_you_know.html

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS CAT



If you think she's cute,
cast your vote at:
cutewithchris.com.



TOP 5 GRAPHIC NOVELS OF 2007

(according to *TIME* magazine)

- **Achewood**, written by Chris Onstad
- **The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen: The Black Dossier**, written by Alan Moore, illustrated by Kevin O'Neill
- **All Star Superman**, written by Grant Morrison, illustrated by Frank Quitely
- **Marvel Zombies 2**, written by Robert Kirkman, illustrated by Sean Phillips and Arthur Suydam
- **Jack of the Fables, Vol. 1: The (Nearly) Great Escape**, written by Bill Willingham, Matthew Sturges and Tony Aikins, illustrated by Andrew Pepoy

WIN A GIFT CARD

We intentionally flubbed some of these lyrics to Alicia Keyes' new hit, "No One." Can you spot our errors? E-mail creative@gripnlife.ca and you could win.

No One

I just want stay home
Where you can pay in feathers
You can't be sure
That Bill is better

You and me in leather
Through the winter nights
Don't you worry 'cause
Everything's going to be bright
People keep gawking, they can say
"ride a bike"
But all my snow says everything's
going to be tight

No one, no one, no one
Can get me to pay for my wheelies

"The education and empowerment of women throughout the world cannot fail to result in a more caring, tolerant, just and peaceful life for all."

- Aung San Suu Kyi

Geek Chic!



Celebrate your inner - or outer - geek:

- *Geek* magazine is dedicated to the latest toys, games, anime TV and DVDs. www.geekmonthly.com
- Geeksugar.com makes the claim "geek is chic." 'nuff said.
- A gift for geeks: hilarious t-shirts are on offer at www.cafepress.com/got_geek.

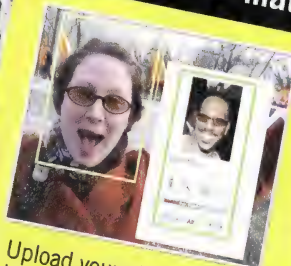
'BAD OFFICIALS
ARE ELECTED
BY GOOD
CITIZENS
WHO DO
NOT VOTE.'

CURIOUS TO KNOW MORE?

VISIT

WWW.APATHEYSBORING.COM

Celebrity face match



Upload your photo and see
which celebrities you look like:

www.myheritage.com
click

"Face Recognition."

A Sinking Feeling

We went on our cruise with dreams of excitement. We got more than we'd bargained for

By Sarah Damberger

I looked down the narrow hallway of the Greek cruise ship and saw the water rushing towards me. I was standing outside my cabin, four decks down and definitely under the waterline. *This isn't happening*, I thought. Icy seawater surged over my toes, snapping me into action. Down the hallway, water was pouring in. I ran the other direction, towards a staircase 50 feet away. My running slowed as the water rose to just below my knee. *Will I make it out alive?*

When my school's travel club

announced that we'd be going to Greece, I was thrilled. We sold chocolates and almonds, planned our tours, and eagerly awaited spring break, which is when our group of 20 students and five chaperones from Tofield School would be going.

The beginning of our trip was amazing. We spent a few days in Athens, touring the Acropolis and shopping, we went to the disco in the evening, then boarded our ship.

It wasn't the best looking cruise ship in the world, but those of us who hadn't been on one before were very excited. Our cabins were cramped and scattered all over the ship. Mine was located on the lowest deck, four flights down. My roommates and I had to listen to the rhythmic and deafening hum of the engine next door to us. The all-you-can-eat buffet and ship disco helped make up for the cabin.

Over several days, we toured the islands of Mykonos and Ephesus,

Rhodes and Knossos, Crete and Delphi. Our guides were so passionate about their history that we couldn't help but be drawn into it.

We approached our final destination of Santorini, and I headed downstairs to change. I met my roommates, Julia and Kristen, in the cabin. We were getting ready when suddenly the ship started shaking and making a grating noise. We looked at each other and laughed nervously.

"OK, now an announcement will come on the intercom saying, 'sorry folks, we just ran into a whale,'" Kristen joked. No announcement came and we started to get scared. The engine started speeding up and working harder and harder.

"Kristen you need to get a shirt on!" yelled Julia.

I ran into the hallway to see what was going on, and the noise turned into a high-pitched screech that sounded like pressure building up. It got louder and louder and I ran back into my room just as the door blew off a nearby storage room and flew by right where I'd been standing. I ran back into the hall and was surrounded by toilet paper, floating like confetti. The cleaning room had blown up.

That's when I looked down the hall and saw water rushing towards me.

I stared in horror until the water hit my feet, then ran for the stairway. I ran up those four flights faster than I thought possible. I finally made it up to the floor with the reception desks and saw Julia with a few people from our group. I ran to them and hugged

them all. We were bawling and people were staring.

I finally got myself together enough to say, "The boat is sinking! There's water downstairs!"

The receptionist tried to reassure us that there was nothing wrong and told us to calm down. That's when a group of about a hundred other screaming people in lifejackets swarmed up the stairs.

Announcements told everyone to go to assigned muster stations, a series of numbered spots on the outer deck where you're supposed to go in an emergency. There, crew members are supposed to give you lifejackets, do a headcount, and instruct you.

Nobody ended up at their proper station. None of us had grabbed a lifejacket, I had no shoes. All I'd managed to grab was a sweater and about a hundred Euros. Most of our group members were in the same situation.

I don't know how much later, the crew started loading people onto lifeboats. Hours later, our group was finally ashore. In a restaurant, we ate like we'd never eaten before. Wrapped in tablecloths against the spring cool, a bus took us to port. Nothing prepared us for what we saw. As we rounded a bend, there was our cruise ship, lying on its side, looking like some huge beached whale, slowly sinking.

I now have profound understanding of how anything can go wrong. I'm so happy to be alive to be able to share my story with people and tell them about how we survived. Life is unpredictable and you have to be ready for anything. ☐

The Making of Me

When it comes to **defining** who you are, the answer isn't always **easy**. Sometimes you stick a **label** on that says, "Me!" and you're darn **proud** of it. Other times it's **hard** to figure out who's staring **back** from the mirror. When you're **playing** on the hockey team, it's easy **knowing** who you are and what **role** to take. But take you out of the team and off the ice and drop you into a new, non-sporty **situation**, and suddenly you're not so **sure**. Are you the goth/**drama** girl? The **jock**/math guy? Maybe the alt-indie/party girl. **Whatever** you call **yourself**, others are **checking** you out and **jumping** to conclusions.



Geek Speak and...

Find out why the geek gets the girl in the movies PLUS: Take a quiz to find your favourite stereotype; Learn how Jenna battled depression and got to know herself; Meet one scary filmmaker; Take our body quiz; Read an essay about not fitting in AND MORE

18



I'm looking for me

Scratch the Surface

Four teens argue looks and first impressions

24

Find your Thing

Find and nurture your passion

26

Lady, Lady! Are You OK?

What happens when mental health meets first aid?

30



I'll Show You All

Why the geeky underdog always seems to get the guy or girl. Not that I'd know

By Scaachi Koul

Hope can come in the smallest ways.

A passing comment from a friend, a good meal, a soothing song. But where, of all places, can we regular citizens find hope, writ large. Forget the little gestures, where do we go for a supsize serving of hope?

Hollywood.

From *Superbad* to *Loser*, there has always been a geek, and there has always been a pretty girl or handsome boy for the geek to chase. As long as this tale has been told, the end has brought the same thing: popular counterpart sees error in his or her ways, dates loser, ends in choreographed musical number where the whole school forgets the rules of their social standings and they realize that they're all in this together.

Teen movies celebrate the loser, the underdog who never wins throughout the film but, at the last minute, wins more, through and through. In real life, however, that isn't always the case. The loser doesn't always win, it's never a clean finish and, sometimes, the winners are the winners to the bitter, bitter end.

So why is it that the loser, the geek, the unpopular main character, always gets the peppy, cute, popular captain of the cheerleading squad? And why is it that his best gal-pal, also a loser and a geek, is never on his mind?

Let's face it: it's a matter of seeing what we want to see. No one wants to watch a movie that displays the truth about how people end up — we go with what we know. Real life usually pairs the two good-looking people with each other, while the two losers — who aren't losers so much as they are less good looking and doubly shy and awkward — wind up together. This is a calculated pattern. Not that you should lose hope that Catharine Zeta-Jones will one day swoop in your window in the middle of the night and whisper in your ear, "Michael and

I are done. I am yours forever!" Frankly, who wants to watch a movie where loser happily dates loser? It's all about hope.

Because that's ultimately what we want: a little hope that the loser in each of us can triumph over the bigger, more popular people we face every day. The story of David and Goliath isn't far off, since we all want to see the little guy prevail. In real life, that may not always happen because people are comfortable with what they're used to. If you think you're a loser (again, see my previous comment above about the use of the word "loser" as it applies to real people) you're going to be with someone who also thinks they're a loser.

The disconnection between the reality we face and the reality we wish for is staggering. Proof leads us to accept that like attracts like. It's not like Brad Pitt divorced Jennifer Aniston to marry Janeane Garofalo.

But that's not the point.

It's not as if real-life geeks don't triumph. It would be easy to say that every girl who ever shot down Bill Gates in high school kicks herself every time he's featured in a *Fortune Magazine* top 10 list. The creator of *30 Rock*, Tina Fey, is likewise living of a kind of real-life revenge of the nerds. Fey actually boasts about her collection of Star Wars action figures and she recently graced the cover of *Geek* magazine.

Still, it's fun to dream and imagine that when we're a loser, hope is not lost and we still may be able to catch the eye of the prettiest girl or best-looking guy in school. Movies let us think that it's possible for us to win, even when it seems hopeless. I mean, look at me! I've dated plenty of losers just to help them realize that it is entirely possible to be with someone as popular as I am, even when they're as nerdy as they are.

Unless...

Oh no. ☐





10 most famous (and some would say ridiculous) high school stereotypes

By Rosy Lee

For us, most of these classic stereotypes are a joke. Please. Not only will you probably not fit into one of them, but you might find that you could belong in every single group, depending on the day. Don't despair! Maybe you'll find some curious quirks about yourself that you never knew, or perhaps some of your more questionable traits will reveal their inner workings

1. The Jock: Her life revolves around sports, duh. She has practices before and after school, and her parents constantly drive her and her pals to games around the city. She either kicks butt at math or hates it, and her closet is predominantly Hollister, track blazers or Lululemon apparel.

2. The Drama Geek: True, most drama geeks are melodramatic and witty, but others are humble and modest. The common characteristic? An irresistible personality and confidence on stage. Poetry, Shakespeare and *West Side Story* are soft spots; a quest for limelight a prerequisite. Yes, life is dedicated to rehearsal, but a little bit of fame wouldn't hurt.

3. The Dumb Blonde: Well, he's not the brightest thing who ever had his tips frosted, but come on, life is about having fun. Tell him a joke any day and he'll probably laugh, if he gets it. Hey, it's the count that thoughts, right? Wait, I mean...

4. The Nerd: Don't be deceived by this sneaky character. The nerd is intelligent and knows it. She travels alone or in packs, eating lunch in classrooms and arguing over foreign policy and school board deprivation. She might not raise a hand in class, but she knows the answers. Oh yeah, she knows.

5. The Slacker: It's not so much what he does as what he doesn't do. A slacker does what everyone wishes they could do: skip school and avoid homework by hanging with some buddies. He plays video games all day and watches Horatio Caine make witty comments until midnight. But he makes sure people know that he'd do awesome in school if he felt like it. Whatever.

6. The Class Clown: School? Work? Pfft. He's laid back and has tons of friends. People love to be around him. He's smart, but he doesn't do his homework. He doesn't need to.

7. The Band Geek: Pretty self-explanatory. Music is her life and she braves the early morning rehearsals for glam trips and performances. If you hang out within a 30-metre radius of the band room, chances are you're a band geek. That means your friends are too. They stick together. In fact, most have never dated anyone outside of the band.

8. The Prep: Cool, calm and collected, the prep travels in packs with other preps. Cousin to the jock, he sports perfectly gelled hair, a popped collar, v-neck sweater, or the occasional sports attire. After all, brand names are your thing, but who's looking? Meh. Only the entire school.

9. The Indie-Alternative Boy/Gal: She knows how to get to concert venues with her eyes closed. The indie-alt usually harbours a talent in the arts: guitar, drama, painting. Edgy hair, converse shoes and a sweet wardrobe consisting mainly of band shirts are symptoms of this stereotype.

10. The Art Freak: He's out there and has much more imagination than he knows what to do with. He'll wake up in the middle of the night or interrupt dinner to sketch out a truly ground-breaking idea. In fact, his notebook margins look like something imploding from the newest *Spider-Man* movie. ☐



The Me Underneath

By Jenna

I used to be depressed and lonely. It took a while to find the strong, positive person that I am today

It was a dull Friday evening.

After supper, I made my way up to my room and turned up my music to blast out every other sound in my house. I sat on my bed with a notebook in my hand, scribbling lyrics and doodles of whatever popped into my head. Thoughts of death and suicide. Thoughts of hating life. *This day is a day just like the day before and the day before that, I thought. This day feels like it will last forever.* This day I decided I wanted to stop living for good.

When I was 14 years old, I was diagnosed with depression, and I suppose that night was the beginning of it.

You'd think a diagnosis would help you better understand yourself, but this only confused me more. I couldn't understand why I felt so low all the time, and how it was even possible. I'm from an average family, and live with both my parents along with two older sisters. I have a pet cat, a dog and some fish. I went to school five days a week and had good friends, just like everyone else. I seemed normal. Still, I never felt normal. When I got home from school my mask would come off and I would turn on some music and

think about my life. I thought about suicide every day. I hated myself. It didn't matter who I was, all I knew was that I was constantly sad. So, it wasn't terribly surprising when my therapist told me I had depression.

Even though I didn't understand who I was, I knew how I felt and the word "depressed" seemed to fit well.

After a year-long journey full of therapists, psychologists and medications, my worst fear was confirmed – I was being sent to the psych ward of a hospital to be treated and monitored more closely. The psychiatrist I was seeing at the time told me I wasn't functioning well and needed to go there for a while. I couldn't have disagreed with her more. Sending me away from my home, my family and my friends didn't seem like it would be very helpful to me at all. Without any warning, the police escorted me to the

hospital. My mom brought me my things later that night. I can't ever remember crying so hard.

It felt more like a prison than a hospital. They let me wear most of my clothes (the ones that were "appropriate") and I did school work during the day, but it still felt like my entire life had been taken away from me. I wanted my bed, my computer, my iPod. The normal things that people take for granted every day were no longer available to me. I felt like I was surrounded by bars. Like a rat in a cage.

The nurses there were nice, but I hated them anyway. I didn't want anything to do with anyone there. Even though I knew I would likely be going home in a few days, it felt like I would be there forever. I was mad at the entire world. It wasn't fair for the government to be able to force me to stay somewhere against my will.

I decided that there must have been something wrong with me. I had to be crazy to be stuck in this place. It never occurred to me before that depression was a mental disorder and I could be considered insane. It was scary to think that, even though the nurses and psychiatrists all told me I wasn't, I still felt like I was crazy. I felt like I would never be OK again.

The only other person I talked to in the hospital was this girl around my age. She was admitted to the psych ward a couple days after me for many of the same reasons and we bonded right away. It made me feel so much better to know

that there was someone else who was going through the same thing as I was. And that thought was the only thing that got me through.

The beginning of overcoming depression, was the moment I realized that I had a serious problem, and had to change it. I knew I needed to get better. So I began to take the meds, and the sleeping pills and whatever else my psychiatrist suggested. I talked to the nurses and they helped me understand the different reasons for my depression.

My friend and I made the best of our time there by having as much fun as we could. Even though there wasn't much to do around there, we tried our best to stay occupied and optimistic. We played cards, watched movies, and told everything to each other. Having her around made everything so much easier because I knew I wasn't alone. I knew someone else understood how I felt and that was the best therapy I ever got.

I spent 11 days in the hospital, trying to force myself to be happy and look happy so I could get out as soon as possible, and once I did, I realized how I needed to change my life. I knew I never wanted to go back, so I decided not to let myself.

I took my prescribed medications every day, and got out of my house as much as I could, doing things I enjoyed. I took control of my life instead of depending on everyone and everything around me to make me happy. I tried my best to replace all the negative thoughts in my head with things that made me smile and slowly, eventually, all the horrible thoughts I had dwelled on in the past seemed to melt away. I focused on the things I liked about myself instead of the things I hated. I pushed myself to do things I thought I could never do and I realized my own potential.

I found myself, and in knowing that, I felt strong, and in control, like I could overcome anything I wanted to. Then I realized that I already had. ☺

Reach out

For a list of symptoms of depression, see page 14, "Depression expressions"

- If you are in crisis right now, call the Mental Health Help Line, available 24/7 for information and referral: 1-877-303-2642
- Call the Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868 or visit www.kidshelpphone.ca
- Find out about defining and treating depression at www.beyondblue.org.au/ybblue/
- Get and give support at www.youthone.com
- HealthLink Alberta can help with depression 1-866-408-5465
- At the TeenLive Vibe, trained youth volunteers at the Distress Centre answer your posts. They also answer the Teen Line and Youth Drug Line between 4 and 11 p.m. every night www.calgaryurbanvibe.ca/teenlinevibe
- Visit the Alberta Mental Health Board and check out resources at www.amhb.ab.ca/Publications/resources/Pages/Brochures.aspx

I thought about suicide everyday.



The Scream King!

By Lacey Morris

Meet Matt Acosta. With an eye for blood and a slightly scary side, he's helping Edmonton celebrate horror

It's an odd way to find comfort, watching horror films with your family. But for Matt Acosta, growing up in one of the only Hispanic families in Camrose, it was one way to retreat from the world.

Today, Acosta is a 24-year-old local filmmaker who has recently gained the respect and admiration of many local movie fans for the countless hours of hard work that he puts into Edmonton's annual horror film festival in October. Called "Return to Odd", the festival gives local aspiring filmmakers the chance to submit some of their work. Return to Odd shows between five and 10 films, which include everything from classic horror favourites, to modern Japanese horror, to the innovative shorts of local filmmakers.

It is the kind of event where people of all ages can gather and share their mutual appreciation and celebrate a not-so-common interest. Suddenly, this unlikely collection of horror fans find themselves fitting in. They have Matt Acosta to thank. His passion for horror cinema is behind his blossoming success as a filmmaker and a festival organizer.

Acosta's love for horror stems from his childhood, when his dad and older brothers would rent horror movies and allow Matt to watch them — under adult supervision. Matt remembers the peculiar joy that he felt at being utterly terrified by the monsters and evildoers that he saw on the screen. That joy eventually evolved into a much more elaborate appreciation for the genre. But Acosta was pretty much a minority in high school.

"I was one of four Hispanic teenagers in a predominantly white community. The three others were my brothers. I was picked on for my ethnic background pretty much on a daily basis," he says. "My friends saw my passion for the horror genre as strange. Where I grew up, anything different, like my fascination with horror, was rarely accepted." At 24, Matt Acosta has been responsible for the success of two

consecutive Return to Odd horror festivals and is currently brainstorming ideas for the third, scheduled to take place at the Metro Cinema in Edmonton's Citadel Theatre on October 28, 2008.

Acosta recently completed his latest short film titled, *Love, Hate, Tragedy*, funded by The Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

"We started a five-day film shoot in November and wrapped up post production in December," he says. His goal is to direct and produce several feature-length films and to someday inspire kids to fulfill their own dreams of making it in the film industry.

Acosta admits that it's stressful trying to make a name for himself in an industry as fast-paced and time-consuming as film, but he has a lot of people to thank for helping him through the rough times and motivating him to fulfill his dreams. He singles out friends and family as contributors to his blossoming success.

"I know that sounds pretty cliché but it's the truth," he says. "I love them all and hopefully one

day I'll be able help them out as much as they've helped me."

Acosta is already building up to 2008. This year, the festival is going national.

"We're currently talking about which bands to book for the upcoming festival, which is open Canada-wide for film submissions," he says. "All of this might extend the festival to two days because of the number of films that we'll be receiving." He also plans to include more vendors selling horror merchandise to fans. "I want Edmonton horror fans to have something cool to look forward to every year." ■

Check it out

To find out more about Edmonton's annual **Return to Odd** horror festival, visit the official myspace page at www.myspace.com/returntoodd. Horror fans in 2008 can get their **Odd** tickets from The Metro Cinema, Mars & Venus, and The Lobby DVD shop.

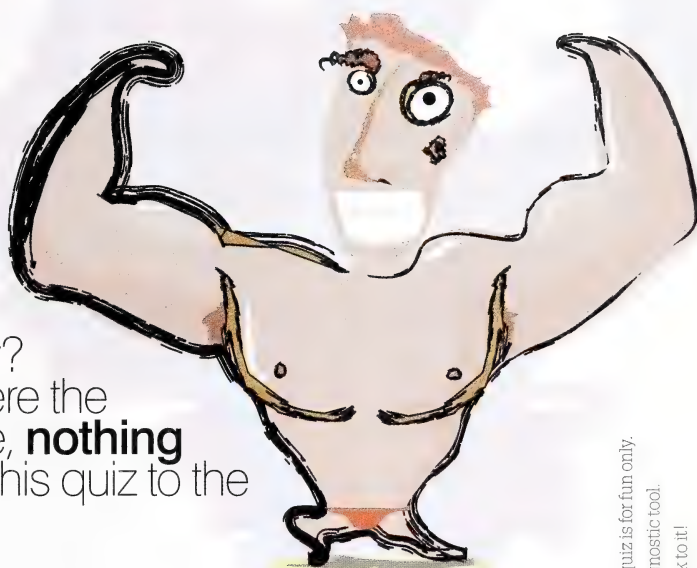


BLADES OF GORY: Matt Acosta is working to make horror hot

Quiz: Does this make me look **fat**?

No one is perfect. But who invented “perfect” anyway? If **everyone** in this world were the same in every way possible, **nothing** would set you **apart**. Take this quiz to the dude/chick in the **mirror**

By Nadia Fatah



Note: This quiz is for fun only. It's not a diagnostic tool. Now get back to it!

1. Are you ashamed of your body?

- a) No, I could run down the street in a bathing suit
- b) Maybe
- c) No comment

2. If you had nothing to do, you could probably be found...

- a) Taking a warm shower
- b) Looking at the latest model or fitness magazines
- c) Looking in the mirror

3. Do you think being leaner is better?

- a) I like the way I look, thank you very much
- b) I'm not sure
- c) Thinner is prettier/buffer

4. You wear baggy clothes because...

- a) I feel more comfortable
- b) I don't look good in tight clothes
- c) I try to hide my body

5. Girls: Do you wear makeup for yourself or for boys?

- a) Myself
- b) Maybe both
- c) Boys

6. Boys: Do you think being a boy is easier?

- a) That never crossed my mind before
- b) Not really. At least girls can hide behind makeup
- c) You've got to be kidding!

7. If there were one thing about your body you could change, what would it be?

- a) Hey – my body isn't just pieces and parts!
- b) Mmm. Maybe my lips
- c) My breasts/ pecs

8. How do you feel around your peers?

- a) I feel comfortable
- b) I feel like my braces draw too much attention
- c) I feel I like I am the fattest of all of them

9. What do you see when you look in the mirror?

- a) Just myself!
- b) Some days it seems alright, but there are some days when I'm not too happy about how I look
- c) I don't know who's looking back at me

10. How do you feel about puberty?

- a) I feel like a grown-up and not a child
- b) I never knew how hard shaving was

- c) Hate the smell and don't even mention the hair down by the bay

MOSTLY As - When it comes to your body, you are very confident. Not many kids are quite so positive. You help your friends, in that you refuse to get into picking apart appearances. It's a great way to help other teens who lack your self-confidence and positive body image. Don't ever change your great attitude.

MOSTLY Bs - You still have a ways to go in your level of self-respect and confidence. No one else can help you find yourself. If you put yourself down, then everyone else will put you down but, if you treat yourself with respect, everyone will see the real you. Strive towards success.

MOSTLY Cs - You haven't quite realized how unique and special your body is. You care too much about what others think. Remember that everyone comes in different shapes and sizes. Pamper yourself and try to do things that make you happy. You spend lots of time thinking about your looks. Focus on different goals: you can do anything you set your mind to. Never give up.



THE SCRATCH SURFACE

Do you judge people by how they look? Four Calgary teens say appearances really matter. The answer? Yes and no

GOTCHA!
by vivian lee

As the saying goes, if it looks like an apple, and smells like an apple, it's definitely a scented candle. Gotcha! We can apply this principle to other things. If it tastes like a lollipop and smells like a lollipop, it is actually a children's throat lozenge. Or, if it sounds and acts like a 12-year-old girl online, it could be really a 50-year-old named Harry Pitts. Sometimes things aren't as they seem.

Some people say appearances affect how we are on the inside. I say otherwise. How people perceive us is based on our appearances, but their perceptions don't change who we are. Other people don't dictate who we can be, unless we give them that power. Trouble doesn't stem from our Abercrombie & Fitch tee but from the fact that we let ourselves care about wearing one.

We have more power than we realize, but we hand it over to the first person who throws us a catty remark. We all do it, even the Beautiful People. They get told that, "Dahling, you're gorgeous!"

day in, day out, until they believe that's all they are and all they really need to be.

It takes 10 seconds to make a first impression. You sidle up to someone, maybe smile, and they take you in. Football jacket, big build, Crest whitestrip smile, and – wham – you just got labelled. Jock. Glasses and a turtleneck. Wham. *Intellectual*.

Some people say, "Hey, it's a good thing. I can't spend my life thinking everyone's amazing at first glance. I need a quicker system." And lots of what's inside can be reflected on the outside: If you're in turmoil, you frown. As far as clothing and facial expression go, we make a choice on what to present, a choice that comes from the inside. So it's actually more like our insides influence who we are on the outside.

And we do give our power away when we let shallow remarks stick like burrs. So let's change the equation. If it looks like you, talks like you, and smiles like you, then it's definitely all you.

MIND YOUR LOOKS

by Jackson Lee

First impressions are way more

important than Vivian says. Making a good first impression is imperative in

building relationships. My dad's in the hair-styling business, and he says a successful initial meeting is crucial for long-term partnerships. A bad meeting could lose a potential customer – and income.

The first impression defines who you are and what makes other people like you. By attractive, I mean what makes other people like you.

Good first impressions happen when you're feeling positive about yourself. When you feel good about yourself, your sense of confidence turns heads, regardless of whether or not you're drop-dead gorgeous. If you feel that you're not good-looking, you won't put a lot of effort into your looks. This attitude will sabotage a good first impression. Physical appearance goes hand-in-hand with self-esteem. If you look good on the outside, you'll feel good about yourself on the inside too.

It never hurts a guy if he "dresses to impress." People don't have to wear Armani to every gathering, but when people are clean and the clothes fit well, they're more approachable. The last thing you want to do is to give off a bad impression before you open your mouth.

And Rosy is going to say otherwise, but maintaining a positive body image is a challenge for guys, too. As the only male member in our quartet, this issue falls to me.

My research says that male grooming and body image are coming into the limelight. In the United States, sales of male-specific cosmetics and toiletries rose 37.3 per cent between 1998 and 2003. According to Euromonitor's 2004 study, the total sales of these products hit the ceiling at \$3.8 billion in 2003. This pressure to look good has led male and female teens to use pills, diets, exercise, products and even cosmetic surgery to change the things they don't like.

Further statistics from the American Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery show that surgery is becoming increasingly popular with men as a way to deal with image maintenance. If you're dishing over a couple of thousand bucks just to get fleshier pecs, fancier eyelids, or smaller ears, that's absurd; you should be proud of what you look like. Yet hundreds of teens still fork over the money.

I think the reason lies in the concept of an ideal body image. Girls are bombarded with images of skinny supermodels, and guys are bombarded with muscles. Did you know guys can actually get liposuction to reveal hard-won "six-pack" abs? In an article he wrote for *Times* magazine, trend-watcher David Rowan said there is a "sharp rise in 'muscle dysmorphia', in which guys exercise obsessively in the mistaken view that their body is too puny."

Why do we do this to ourselves? I still say first impressions and appearance are important, but you can take it too far, spending hours at the gym and weekends at the mall trying to find something that looks good. What has happened to our carefree days?

If you're going to tell me that guys have it easy Rosy, think again!

JUDGING OURSELVES

by Rosy Lee

We live in a world

obsessed by appearances.

People judge what they

see because what they cannot see is harder to understand. Of course, high school is the prima donna of outside personas and first impressions – but whatever happened to "the inside is what matters?"

It's impossible not to compare yourself to others – impossible not to judge, even when you know it's wrong. People should worry more about

how they portray themselves to the world, rather than *what*. If you're chubby and cool with it, good for you! If you want people to think you're athletic then, duh, stay fit. But why try to make yourself look perfect unless you want others to think you're perfect? No one looks at you as closely as you do. Maybe we feel compelled to judge others because we judge ourselves so harshly.

Example: boys, please. You have it easy. Go out and buy what? Admit it Jackson – a few t-shirts? A pair of jeans? Think about us girls and our hair, our accessories, our skirts and shoes. We make this effort, why shouldn't the guys? Maybe they just don't care.

But I'm being unfair. There are lots of reasons you might want to look good and it is attractive to have confidence. However, it's important for you to look good for others and for yourself. You should care about how you look. Your inner appearance can have an effect on the wrapping. If you dress classy, you appear classy. If you wear tracksuits and jerseys, you're into sports. Yes?

As for first impressions, some say that it takes seconds for someone to form an impression about you. So, sure, worry about your first impression. But first impressions aren't all about your outer appearances.

If you seem funny, arrogant or smart, that's enough for someone to figure out if they want to talk to you again. Personality figures large in first impressions. So don't just look at the outside. Give them a get-out-of-jail-free card and get to know what they're like – behind the persona – before you set them straight.

LITTLE LIES

by Jackson Lee

Kurt Vonnegut once said, "We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be." It's true, particularly when it comes to how the outer shell affects its inner contents. Many people believe that no matter how you change the packaging, what's inside never changes. This is one of those little lies society tells itself. Of course the outside affects the in, and not always for the better.

Beautiful people aren't always nice, and unattractive people aren't always mean. Sometimes, the attractive people I've met are so caught up with their hair, face and nails that they're too busy to have a personality. Even then, the unattractive people I've met are sometimes so uncomfortable with that outer shell that they're too shy to interact.

And Jackson, you're going to get a lot of flack for saying boys have a tough time with appearances, but I agree with you. Boys have a hard time, harder yet because – while it's socially acceptable for girls to talk about physical insecurities – boys don't have that luxury. If you're a male and you feel pressure to be beautiful, you're immediately labelled gay.

Jackson and Rosy, you both believe that first impressions are important, but I disagree. I remember my first impression of Vivian. I thought she was arrogant, obnoxious and shy. It took months until I realized that she was nice, funny and liked me more than I could believe. First impressions proved futile, and they were mainly based on her looks. Vivian is a small, quiet girl and I mistook her shyness for dislike. People don't have time to consider your personality during first impressions; it does, after all, only take seconds.

Looks are important. It's an unfair truth that people suppress. Even the kindest people judge others by the way they do their hair and what clothes they wear. That's not about to change.

What can change, however, is our standard of beauty. We can transform what we believe is beautiful to a healthier version of beauty. We have the power to set new standards. All it takes is a little less lip gloss and a little more education. ☺



How to find your thing

You studied for years to be a **ballerina** and you've been accepted to the National Ballet School – **NOT!** Most of us don't have that level of certainty

By Teresa Kwon

Illustrations by Rick Sealock

Some kids have known right from childhood what they want to be when they grow up. And often their aptitudes match their choices. Right from the get-go they're good at math, or sports, or language arts and that's helped lead them down the right path to a great career, or at least a fulfilling hobby. They are the lucky ones.

The rest of us, probably the majority, have a harder time finding our passions. But we're reaching the time when we need to start thinking about our career paths. We're looking at how different education programs might suit us and what we can do after post-secondary. It's hard to know what jobs match your interests and how many options are available.



In order to find a career path that is both interesting and satisfying, it's important to learn about yourself first. Here are a few ideas that may help you answer your grandparents when they ask you, "So, what do you want to do with your life?"

Ask yourself. You can't depend on your parents or friends to tell you what your skills are. Remember, you know yourself the best. And the best way to find out about you is to question yourself. What do you do for fun? What skills do you have? More importantly, which of those skills do you enjoy? What kind of work routine fits your personality style – do you hate sitting at a desk? Is it easier to focus in the morning or the evening? Answering these questions might help you narrow your choices.

Consider your hobbies. Sometimes the best route to a satisfying career is to look at what you do for fun and mine it for job possibilities. If you like to paint, take an art class at the closest community centre. If you like to play the piano, maybe you would enjoy teaching piano, tuning pianos, selling pianos, building pianos or moving pianos. Well, maybe not. But you get the picture. If you are a logical or a mathematical person, then research other areas that involve numbers, such as accounting or engineering. Taking extracurricular classes is a great way to improve your skills.

Volunteer. If you are one of those people who doesn't know what you like to do or what you're suited to, it's time to experiment with a volunteer position. Volunteer at a nearby elementary



The search is on

Finding your thing, whether it's a career or a hobby, may take a long time, or you may find it very quickly. When searching for your passion, consider these tips:

- When you are doing something, think: what would I rather be doing right now?
- Do you have the urge to draw? To write? Give it a go.
- What's your favourite fantasy? Try to relate it to something real. If you dream of flying, try something like surfing or skiing.
- Don't choose something because someone else wants you to. This is about you. (But it's OK to take advice.)
- If your parents say that you'll like something, there's actually a good chance they'll be right.
- Remember, you may not like something until you try it.
- Don't be afraid to try a new or unusual sport. (They may not be as dangerous as your grandma thinks.) Live life to the fullest.
- Be true to yourself in choosing your thing. Don't be a follower.
- Have a go at the arts. They're not just drawing, acting, and music. You may find a hidden talent.
- Never let anyone make you believe that you can't do something.
- Remember, not all sports are team sports, and not all sports are competitive.
- If you find yourself good at an art, such as drama, sculpting or writing for example, don't worry about being called a sissy. Those talents are rare.
- If you're not particularly artistic, it's OK, you don't have to be.
- If you're terrible at something but really like it, you may have found your thing! Maybe it will turn into a lifelong passion that you can constantly improve.
- If you have a gift, use it.

– By Rachel Walters



school, hospital, seniors' centre, theatre, arts club or environmental organization. It may help you focus your interests and give you a general idea of what you like – and don't like – to do. It can help you identify whether you like to work with the public or behind the scenes.

Identify your values. Identifying your values is one of the most important factors in considering your career path. People are often disappointed when the career they thought would suit them doesn't match their values. For example, your chosen career may require lots of overtime or doesn't offer a high salary. It might require you to move to the city when you'd rather live in the country. If travelling is important to you, you'll want a job that offers flexibility. If you want your evenings and weekends free, think about that, too. Then be prepared to be flexible. (But remember: Few people in junior positions get to call the shots when they're new to the job.)

Distinguish your skills. Think of anything that you do well. Are you a fantastic artist? Are you an amazing leader? Maybe you bake a mean soufflé. Perhaps you have an eye for misplaced commas and the ability to remember details. Maybe you are the most organized person you know. You have skills that distinguish you from others. Find your skills and polish them.

Attend job fairs. Job fairs often have a variety of employers in attendance. These people can usually tell you what skills, education and experience you'll need to work in their particular field. Walk around and see what kinds of jobs are available. You may want to have a list of your interests, values, and skills to compare against the job requirements.

Talk to people. Interview real, live people who work in fields you're interested in. They can tell you about the skills they brought to the job, the working conditions and what they get out of it.

Narrow your focus. When you feel confident about who you are, and have a general idea of your interests, it's time to narrow your focus. Do you love to take photos of your cat in the backyard? Maybe photography is for you. But what type? There are photojournalists, wedding photographers and studio photographers. If engineering is your bag, would you rather build bridges or circuit boards? The best way to narrow your focus is research, research and more

research. Google it, talk to your parents and your friends' parents; look at job ads and educational requirements.

Don't get frustrated. If it seems like you're the only one who can't decide what to do with your life, don't sweat it (at least, not too much). Choosing a career is tough. And while you'll never be stuck with your decision – people can, and do, switch careers – doing your homework can save you a lot of money and time. ■

Ask ALIS

The Alberta Learning Information Service, or ALIS, features information on careers, learning and employment. It lets you search by occupation, education and even general interest. Check out some occupational profiles that include salary expectations, description of duties, occupational outlook and aptitudes. You can even take a cool test that generates career ideas! Visit www.alis.alberta.ca.



It takes a little **effort**,
but the **good** news is,
you **won't** even
break a sweat



Exercise Your **GREY** Matter

Everybody knows it's a great idea to get and stay active. Your body was designed to move, and staying slumped over in one position all the time, whether it's at your computer or sprawled out on the couch, can cause physical strain and injury. Well did you know that you can practice better mental fitness, too? You can do it just about anywhere and you don't need any safety gear or gym memberships.

Your best bet for some of these tips is to find a quiet space and sit comfortably in an upright position, with your spine relatively straight. Breathe slowly and deeply. Close your eyes and repeat these steps a few times. Once you get the hang of it, you can do this almost anywhere. Here are our top five tips for getting mentally fit.

Dream a place – Allow your imagination to conjure up a dream location. Maybe your ideal place is a beach, or path through a snowy wood. It might even be Grandma's kitchen, with the smell of cookies all around you. Let yourself be carried away in the comfort and calm of your ideal location.

Start a collection – Imagine a special locked box, one that you'd use to keep treasures in. Start a mental list of times you have felt your best. Imagine putting these memories away in the box for safekeeping. Like anything precious, you can open the imaginary box and inspect the contents when you like. Feeling low? Cast your mind back to the time your team won an important game. Remember the first time you drove a car, or earlier, a bike. Add new memories when you can.

Walk it off – It's no secret that exercise promotes feelings of well-being. It can also help ease depression. If you hate exercise, try joining a group of people at the same fitness

level as you. Join a running group or recreational sports team. You might enjoy it!

Deal with negative thoughts – This is tricky. Learn to interrupt negative thoughts that muscle in on your consciousness. They won't go away and you can't ignore them, so look for a concrete reason behind them and deal with that. For example, if there's a paper you're worrying about, devote some of the worry time to chipping away at the research. If you can't do much about it – say you've handed the paper in and you

keep imagining that you're going to tank – distract yourself with other assignments, socializing, or a favourite, healthy activity, such as long walk or movie with friends.

Be in the moment – If you are working on math, forget about social studies for now. Set aside time and turn off the IM and TV. If you are socializing with a friend, enjoy her company. Focus your attention on her and let your voicemail pick up your calls. Wherever you are, enjoy that moment to the fullest, and don't get distracted by other thoughts.





Lady, lady! Are you OK?

If you get a concussion during wrestling

practice or cut your finger in Home Ec., chances are, a teacher or another school staff member will administer medical first aid. Within the next year, there will also be someone on staff at your school who's able to help students and others experiencing a mental health problem or crisis.

By 2009, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Canada hopes to have trained at least one staff member in every Alberta school. MHFA Canada is a program that teaches people from any background how to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health problems.

Like medical first aid, the training involves a short, intensive course. People who complete the training are called "mental health first aiders" and are able to provide initial help in a mental health emergency. You know, stuff like what to do if someone has a panic attack or if they find someone who has overdosed. First aiders take charge until professional treatment is available or until the crisis is over.

Big deal, you may be thinking. Well, it kind of is! Case in point: imagine how life would be for a certain celebrity if only someone in her inner circle knew what signs and symptoms to look for. (Oops, she did it again!)

Interested in becoming trained? MHFA Canada is currently developing a youth program. Stay tuned.

Unlock the puzzle

Try your hand at our word search puzzle, based on the mental health first aid article on this page! Visit www.griponlife.ca for the solution.

E	X	E	H	S	B	Y	Y	H	D	C	Z	Q	E	L
K	C	O	M	Q	U	T	X	I	Z	V	T	C	U	I
R	V	N	D	E	E	P	R	A	H	K	N	I	V	S
V	G	R	A	I	R	E	P	L	I	A	U	E	F	T
S	E	I	X	R	C	G	F	O	T	V	S	C	Q	E
W	I	N	F	T	U	V	E	S	R	M	N	R	B	N
T	A	B	I	L	T	S	B	N	N	T	O	U	T	I
Y	N	O	I	K	E	U	S	J	C	P	I	O	J	N
V	N	M	D	L	S	S	Y	A	P	Y	S	S	R	G
T	R	E	A	T	M	E	N	T	E	M	S	E	H	E
S	N	O	I	T	U	L	O	S	E	R	E	R	E	R
H	E	A	L	I	N	G	P	N	J	Q	R	C	A	F
G	V	F	C	E	P	N	T	O	Q	U	P	N	L	B
Y	R	M	N	V	O	A	O	G	Y	R	E	E	T	W
P	L	E	H	Y	L	H	N	P	T	D	D	K	H	U

ANXIETY
DEPRESSION
DIRECTION
EMERGENCY
HEALING
HEALTH
HELP
LISTENING
MENTAL
REASSURANCE
RESOURCE
SELF
SOLUTIONS
SUBSTANCE
SUPPORT
TREATMENT

Making Room for Difference

Lip gloss and tight jeans or a clean face and p.j. pants? What really counts is what you think of yourself

By Courtney Ford



"You look good in those jeans" my mother says.

"No I don't," I say. They feel too tight. "I don't like wearing them and they are not me at all. Can't I just get some sweat pants?"

"You have enough of those," she says. "It won't kill you to wear other pants. Everyone else wears jeans."

It's the ongoing fight I have with my mother – when she can get me into a mall, that is. I am not like every other girl. I don't care what I look like for anyone! I've never really fit in with the girls in school. I've never even fitted in with the girls in my family. But I'm pretty confident about who I am – and who I'm not.

The image of what girls "should" look like has changed, from what they should wear to how they should look, act and walk. It seems like the fewer clothes a girl wears the "sexier" she is to guys. I really don't need to see half-naked girls or guys walking around town or in my school.

I don't want to live up to these stereotypes.

I am not the normal girl, you'll find. I hate wearing jeans, I don't wear makeup and I don't do my hair. I shouldn't have to dress up and put makeup on to get people to like me. If you don't like the way I look, don't look at me. If you don't like the way I act then you don't have to be around me. It's either take me as I am or don't take me at all.

I come from a family of five: mother, father and two sisters. I am the boyish girl in the family. I have always been outside with my dad, helping him do yard work or in the garage, and my sisters were always in the house.

My older sister recently got married, and my other sister is getting married and just had her first baby. They both like shopping and doing "girl stuff." Growing up, my two sisters were always doing things together. Me, on the other hand, I'd rather get dirty than dress pretty. Growing up was not always fun, but now I get along

with my sisters just fine, even though sometimes I think I'm not the little sister they'd like me to be.

In school I've never been all that popular, but I've never really cared. I'm not like other girls; I wear p.j. pants most of the time. I don't really get along with some kids. But I go to school to get my work done, not to make friends, so it doesn't really bug me. I think being popular is a stereotype, just like being emo, or cool or a loser. Under it all, you're the same person. People in school are too fast to judge.

A lot of my friends hate the way they look, or think they are fat and ugly. If you take a negative image of yourself, you won't have enough confidence to do great things. People bring you down or raise you up, but no one can change you. The image you have of yourself, only you can change.

No matter who you are, what you look like, there's going to be someone in the world – guy, girl, boyfriend, girlfriend or maybe just a friend – who is going to love you the way you are, p.j. pants or jeans. ☐

Teens and Self-Esteem

An American organization called The National Association for Self-Esteem conducted an extensive review of studies done in the 1970s, 80s and 90s.

The review concluded that, while defining and measuring self-esteem is difficult, most studies point to a relationship between low self-esteem and many problems facing teenagers. For example, the studies in the review associate low self-esteem with poor performance in school, teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse and even suicide.

But if you think the news is all bad, the review also found evidence that "programs to foster self-esteem can serve as a 'social vaccine' in reducing the incidence of many such problems."

Check it out at: www.self-esteem-nase.org/research.shtml

Check out Dove's interactive "self esteem zone" online for games and quizzes aimed at girls:

www.campaignforrealbeauty.ca



A Slap on the Wrist

By Samantha Marcellin and
Bhuvana Sankaranarayanan

Grip asked two teens to take on opposing sides of a tricky argument. They didn't disappoint

Q: If we can't vote, drink or sometimes even drive, as teenagers are we really responsible for our actions? Should we be punished as adults for serious crimes?

Samantha Marcellin answers YES:

There are many people who agree that the *Young Offenders Act* is much too lenient.

Recently, a young girl in Medicine Hat was convicted of murdering her family, and received a sentence of five years in a psychiatric institution, and another five in community supervision. This sentence is far too lenient. It doesn't match the severity of the crime and it doesn't serve to deter other young offenders.

There are other positive outcomes of harsher sentencing. It may be possible that fewer crimes are committed. And a general communal sense of security comes about from appropriate punishment.

And the big thing that needs more attention is the punishment. These individuals aren't learning anything by getting a slap on the wrist and being sent back out into the world. A heavier focus has to be put on punishment and rehabilitation for youth. When these kids get off easy, they think, "Hey, I didn't get into too much trouble for that, I wonder how much farther I could go."

When more serious penalties are a known result, then what better deterrent is there than that? Youth need clear-cut reasons not to do things they know are illegal.

Age needs to be taken into consideration when discussing punishment for anything. Anyone age 12 and up should be completely aware of what they are doing. They should

A she said/she said
DEBATE

know what is legal and what isn't in our society, at least for such crimes as assault, theft and murder. Having this specific knowledge should stop them from breaking the law. In the cases that it doesn't, they need to be totally responsible for their actions and ready to face the consequences. We're talking about youth here, not children or infants. These individuals are almost adults. They need to start making adult decisions.

Severity of the crime is also a large element of sentencing. If the crime is not a terribly serious one, such as minor criminal mischief, then a punishment or retribution such as community work would be the best option for all offenders, not just youth. That's not to say it would be an easy job. If helping out is going to be the punishment, then it's important that it still be hard enough to deter delinquent behaviour. When youth see harsher punishments befalling their peers, they can look at their own behaviour and consider their futures.

Some young offenders argue that they're just kids, and wonder why others want them to pay for their actions. The point is, some of these "kids" can drive, they can have jobs. They are big parts of the community and are aware of how things work. Sure there are naive teens out there, but the same can be said of adults. We are all people, there shouldn't be such a gap with sentencing.

Also, the families that are affected by these crimes feel a lot more closure when they know the offender is paying for what they have done. You would feel cheated if a child of yours was murdered, and the criminals didn't even end up facing jail time on account of their age, and instead got to continue their lives under watch of the same institutions that could have punished them.

The criminal system is here to work for

us; deterring and punishing is necessary to protect us now and in the future. Harsher sentencing for serious young offenders shouldn't be a second thought.

Bhuvana Sankaranarayanan says NO:

An Albertan 13-year-old was recently convicted of first-degree murder, and now faces years of supervision. She is the youngest person to ever have been convicted in Canada of multiple counts of murder. The question now arises as to whether teenagers should be held responsible for their actions and tried for such serious crimes as adults, or if they cannot be held responsible for such actions.

Without being recognized by society as "full" adults and without all the rights that

punish teenagers as adults, but treat them like children in other regards. This is the worst of both worlds. Without allowing teenagers to participate in society, they shouldn't be punished as adults.

Teenagers are not mature enough to be held responsible for their actions. The 13-year-old girl on trial admitted that she was in a zombie-like state during the murder, and that the murder was suggested by her adult boyfriend, who told her to kill the members of her family. Teenagers are still in a transition period between a childlike state and adulthood, therefore are swayed and manipulated easily. If an adult convinces them to do something, teenagers cannot be held responsible for their actions, because they

are not in a position to make intelligent and informed decisions; instead, they may act simply upon gut feelings and out of love or admiration for the person

If teenagers can't participate in society, they shouldn't be punished as adults

an adult enjoys, can teenagers be held just as accountable for their actions? My research into the topic revealed that first: teenagers don't participate fully in society as adults do, and therefore cannot be held accountable for their actions as adults are. Second, teenagers aren't mature enough to be held responsible.

Teenagers do not participate fully in society. They are not legally given the same treatment as adults. They aren't allowed to vote, are not allowed to drink, cannot drive until they reach the age of 16, cannot marry without parental consent, and can't even choose what movies are appropriate for them to watch. In short, they do not have the same rights as adults. How can they have the same responsibilities as adults? It's unfair and unjust to

person who manipulated them. When teenagers finally mature as adults – that is when they should be tried as adults, when they're in a position to make rational and sensible decisions regarding such important matters.

This doesn't say that you cannot punish teenagers for serious crimes. By all means, anyone who breaks the law must be punished. However, it is unfair to try teenagers as adults for decisions that they may have made simply due to childish impulses or manipulation, and will almost certainly regret later, as they mature and learn more of the world. Even if "too many of today's children have straight teeth and crooked morals," remember that they are, after all, just kids. ■



Help Wanted

Got a **niggling question** that no-one can answer, or that you're too **afraid** to ask your units, teacher or **best friend**? Send it to us. We **guarantee** anonymity, and we're beyond embarrassment. We'll find an **expert** to answer the most **persistent** question you have related to any topic: relationships, **school**, sexuality, puberty, drugs, **love**, life, and the pursuit of **happiness**. So... **what** are you **waiting** for?

Question: My mom wants me to see a psychologist. She says I'm withdrawn and tired and my grades have dropped. She thinks I'm into drugs or depressed or something. How can I convince her I don't need a shrink?
— **Tired Tally**

Dear Tally,
Tell your mom that you think you're fine, and listen to what she has to say. Try making a deal with her. Pick a date together and promise you'll try to turn things around on your own.

Start by trying to pick up your grades. Attend all classes and take notes. Also, spend time doing things you enjoy, or try a new hobby. Get out of the house; call up old friends and get active. There are all kinds of courses and recreational sports classes available at community centres and local fitness facilities.

Set a time period, and if you don't live up to your end of the bargain, agree to see the psychologist. Be sure to cooperate if you go. You might even find it helpful, and it's not usually a permanent arrangement! Your mom may be aware of some things about you that you're not even noticing.

Question: My friend and I noticed some fresh spray paint on the outside of the school. It said: "All (racial slur) should die." My friend says that's not just vandalism, it's a hate crime. Is he right? What's a hate crime?
— **Hate-free Henry**

Hey now, Henry,
In Edmonton, the police say a hate crime is: "An offence committed against a person or property, which is motivated, in whole or in part, by the suspect's hate, bias or prejudice towards an identifiable group based on real or perceived, race, national or ethnic origin, language, color, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation or any other similar factor."

Hate crimes include not just doing violence based on an identifiable group, but also threatening violence. And acts of mischief or vandalism count, so the graffiti on your school is technically a hate crime. Other hate crimes include: distributing hate literature or hate mail, threatening phone calls, and/or destruction of religious property or symbols.

A "hate incident" isn't criminal in nature, but police encourage the public to report

these incidents. Intimidation against identifiable groups or individuals, distribution of prejudicial material, and/or making racial slurs are hate incidents.

You should definitely report what you saw on your school wall to your local police service's complaint line. Don't dial 911 unless the crime is in progress.

Question: Is HIV the same as AIDS?
— **Stumped in St. Albert**

Hey Stumped,
No, HIV is the virus that eventually leads to AIDS. You can have HIV for many years and feel and appear very healthy. But as the virus chips away at your immune system, you become increasingly susceptible to other infections, including cancers. Once you are sick like this, it's called "acquired immune deficiency syndrome" — AIDS.

AIDS can be delayed or prevented by treating HIV before it wrecks the immune system. HIV is contagious even when the infected person has no symptoms. It's transmitted through body fluids, so sexually active teens should consistently use condoms, even the first time they have sex, to avoid HIV. Intravenous drug users should use a clean needle every time, and not share it.

If you may have been exposed to HIV, ask your doctor, clinic, or public health centre for an HIV test.

Help Wanted is provided for general informational purposes only and is not intended to replace consultations with your doctor or to provide medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any personal medical and health questions that you may have.

E-mail helpwanted@griponlife.ca
or mail **Help Wanted**, c/o Grip Magazine
10259-105 St.
Edmonton, AB T5J 1E3

TALK MONEY

**JUST BECAUSE
WE'RE TEENAGERS
DOESN'T MEAN
WE CAN'T HANDLE
OUR MONEY.**

**BUT, HEY, WE ALL
HAVE TO START
SOMEWHERE**

BY JESSICA BILLINGSLEY





Managing your money is simpler than it may first appear. Most people tend to stick to a basic thought: "Money comes in, money goes out," and that's all they need to know. But managing your finances properly can be a rewarding experience.

Here's a typical quandary. Perhaps you're wondering whether you should go to a movie with your friends. It should be a simple decision, but you know that you're not getting paid until next month and your parents have put their foot down: they are not lending or giving you any more spending money. If you go to that movie, that's all the money you'll have for a good period of time.

But what if you could stop all that unnecessary money drama, without winning the lottery? It sounds too good to be true. And even if there were a way, maybe you think you couldn't do it. Not so, my friends. Money management can be easy, and it's necessary. At some point, you'll be talking about paying the rent, not admission to a film.

First, you should be aware of the difference between saving and investing. Understand that saving is for near-term goals, like a vacation, car, or snowboard. Investing is for longer-term, larger goals at least five years away. Think college, and eventually, retirement. Investment does carry risks, such as not earning nearly as much as desired, or worse – loss of principal (your initial investment). But a wise investment can give you a higher rate of return over the long run.

Before you start investing, you have to save a little money. One thing that can help is a budget. Budgets are plans for savings and spending, so you can have the money available to you for regular investing. Budgets are good for short-term savings as well, so don't be afraid to get out a piece of paper and begin planning. Savings help teach you that in order to make a big purchase, you have to set the money aside first.

Set some goals for yourself, for any sort of savings. Make it a specific purpose. "Start with a basic set of goals, and be innovative and motivated," says Edmonton accountant Vic Demaere. Goal-setting makes it easier to stick to your plans and to save the money you may otherwise spend. Goals should be realistic and have some sort of specific amount to be saved in a reasonable amount of time. Saving for goals is actually quite simple.

If you want to save on entertainment, try a discount day at your theater, rent movies, and share magazines, books and music with your friends.

Consider MP3 players and cell phones, favourite teen gadgets. Kids are concerned with getting the latest and greatest, but do you really need the new iPod touch when you have a perfectly good, but not so touchy, iPod? Do you need one with 80GB? Do you even listen to all of those songs? And then there are cell phones. If you already have one, it's probably perfectly functional.

If you already own these items, even if they aren't the newest, consider setting that money aside for a different purpose. Maybe you're saving for a car. "Spend money wisely, think about whether or not you need items," Demaere advises. Straight from an expert, boys and girls.

When it comes to clothing, don't go out and buy brand new designer items. Buy clothes on sale from your favourite stores. Look for clothes that don't need to be dry-cleaned. Hunt for cool, one-of-a-kind items at garage sales and thrift stores.

If that designer item is a must-have, there are plenty of consignment stores where the

clothing is practically brand-new and much cheaper.

And when it comes to food, you can go from "cheap" to "free." Take a look at your typical food expenses. Don't change your habits, but track your outlay of cash for a week. You could buy grub on a regular basis in the school cafeteria and pay for it. Or you could pack your lunch or snacks, for free, from the fridge and cupboard your parents have kindly stocked. If you do go out for a rare lunch, order water instead of pop, and make use of coupons. Come Friday night, all that extra lunch money is still in your wallet, and chances are you ate better.

If you decide to keep your money in the bank, be choosy and find a bank that works for you and suits your own needs. You want one that will help you receive the highest interest on your savings, makes it easy for you to add to your savings, and doesn't charge you for account usage.

6 ways to avoid waste

1. Don't spend your free time hanging around in malls. Find other places to enjoy your time.
2. Make a list before planning a shopping trip. Identify the kind of clothes you're after. This can help you avoid impulse buys.
3. Have a "waiting price" in mind so that you know what your money limit is. If, for example, a particular item you're after costs more than \$20, you agree with yourself to wait and consider the purchase.
4. Purchase under retail value. Try to buy items on sale.
5. Buy what you love, what fits you well and what you can really use. It's simple, don't waste money on something you don't care very much about. Even if it is cool.
6. Before you buy ask yourself this: Is this item a want or a need?

Almost everyone has bought something on the spot that they believed they wanted and then regretted it later.

June Beibin, a financial services representative from TD Canada Trust says that the bank offers a youth bank account that allows teens to open and use an account without service charges until they are 19.

"It's so teens get used to having and using a bank account," she says. Unfortunately, most accounts, including this kind, pay less than one percent interest on funds if your account balance is under \$5,000. If you want to lock away some cash, she says that you can consider buying a Canada Savings Bond or a General Investment Certificate, which pays nearly four per cent interest on \$1,000 over a year. That means you'll earn \$39 at the end of that year.

Try to constantly add to your savings, setting aside a portion of your paycheque, allowance or birthday money that you won't touch. Don't be overly concerned if you slip now and then and don't add to your savings. It takes practice. Once you get used to the idea of a budget, it'll get easier as it goes along. A little motivation will take you a long way. And that's where curbing that nasty habit of impulse buying comes in. Almost everyone has bought something on the spot that they believed they wanted and then regretted it later.

Now, even if it may be difficult at first, there is a way to handle impulse buys. Go home and think about the item and whether or not you should actually purchase it. Ask yourself some questions. "Why do I want it

and do I need it?", "How long and hard did I work for this money?" and "Do I already have one?"

Also consider waiting to purchase an item until the price drops. Items such as movies, CDs and electronics often drop in price. Consider asking a friend who may own the item you crave if you can borrow it. You may discover that you don't actually like it that much. Also consider shopping around, first. You may find the item cheaper at another store. Be sure to check the store's refund policy as well.

Avoid credit cards, even "secure credit cards." A secure credit card is a bit like a bank card, only it's accepted as a credit card. However, once you use the card you could actually end up overspending. Because, like with a credit card, when you make a small purchase the merchant may choose to post it at the end of the day, therefore the funds will not go through until later. So, even if you have a limited amount of money on your card, it may not go over as smoothly as you think. You could still overspend.

Money and the issues that come with it are a typical part of everyday life. The only trouble is, many people have difficulty managing money in the right way. They really want one thing, when they should be saving for something entirely different. Managing your money won't take the fun out of having it, it will just make it easier for you to have the things you want, and still feel secure. ■

Invest wisely

You could try your hand at investing. It's a scary thought. Beginners should do some research before considering which stocks to put money into. Like many an investor out there, you are probably torn between greed and fear. You want to get as high a return as possible, whether you're saving for post secondary, to start a business or early retirement. But maybe you've heard horror stories of being burned by market declines. Maybe it looks too complicated for you and you're just not sure where to start. Talk to your bank and your parents. And do some research. Here are some places to start:

THE MOTLEY FOOL – This investment website has a section just for teen investors: www.fool.com/teens/teens.htm and it offers a book for sale called *Investment Guide for Teens: 8 Steps to Having More Money Than Your Parents Ever Dreamed Of*, by David and Tom Gardiner

RICH BY THIRTY – A book for young adults by University of Alberta grad Leslie Scorgie. It landed her on *Oprah*, maybe it can help you. She concludes the book with 10 pieces of advice. Number one is "Start now"

MAKING ALLOWANCES – This site offers money management tips, including investment primers, especially for teens. It has downloadable forms that allow a teen to track and understand money a little better. www.makingallowances.com

THE COMPLETE IDIOT'S GUIDE TO MONEY FOR TEENS

– By Susan Shelly, this guide offers basic financial advice

A photograph of three young women, the Vissia Sisters, posing in a rustic setting. The woman on the left is holding a banjo, the woman on the right is holding a guitar, and the woman in the foreground is holding a mandolin. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The background features a large tree trunk and decorative floral patterns.

Family Harmony

The Vissia Sisters are the rarest of teen siblings. Sure, they make critically acclaimed music together, but they also get along

By Shelley Astill



I take a seat at a round table, like a knight in the movie *Excalibur*, except that I'm in Bing's Chinese restaurant in Stony Plain, Alberta. The smell of ginger beef helps knock back the pre-Christmas chill. Across the table there are three huge and beautiful smiles awaiting my first words. They aren't knights or warriors; they're musicians, singers and sisters.

This is the first time I've met them, but I've had the pleasure of seeing the Vissia Sisters perform live twice. One of those times, they opened for Canadian rock icon Trooper. The fresh and the grizzled.

The girls' voices and talent for song have made them a force to be reckoned with on the Canadian country music scene. Alexandra, 18, Aleisha, 17, and Andrea, 14, are sisters who've attracted audiences across the country, as well as in Arizona, Tennessee and Japan. Some say their music is country, others have said bluegrass, but if you ask the girls, it's both. A blend of folk mixed with a little country flavour, "roots" is what the sisters call it. The three have been performing together for more than six years, nearly half of Andrea's life.

Growing up in the heart of Alberta, the Vissias always had a love for music. They loved songwriting, dancing, singing, acting – anything to do with music. Taking piano lessons at age five seemed to be a trend in the Vissia household.

"I hated piano lessons! I was jealous of Alex because she could play anything," Aleisha says from across the table.

Alexandra hands me a menu, along with their newly-released CD: *Chrysalis*.

Chrysalis? I start to wonder to myself. What does that mean?

Reading my mind, Alex answers, "It's the definition of becoming."

"It shows the butterfly breaking from her cocoon," Aleisha cuts in.

The word "chrysalis" does seem to represent the independence and creative style of the sisters. The new beginnings in their music are apparent with songs such as "Paper Doll," "Ferris Wheel Song," and "Make You Believe." Inspiration and musical favourites for the girls include: Patty Griffin and Regina Spektor. "And I love Norah Jones!" Alexandra says.

Most of the girls' songs are written from personal experience with school, family and boyfriends. "Mostly my boyfriends," Aleisha says with a sly smile. Composed with the girls' own words, the lyrics of the songs speak to many teens. And singing isn't their only talent.

Dancing (everything from ballet to tap) as children, performing and playing on stage was the natural path for the sisters. "It [performing] started so randomly," Aleisha says. Our food arrives and there's a pause as we start to chow down.

In 2000, the girls started to take music more seriously. They started singing lessons and learning to play various musical instruments, such as acoustic guitar, resonator guitar, banjo, mandolin and the fiddle. Creating so much music, the girls started to do some performances in their school and community and pretty soon around the world. They've performed at the likes of the Calgary Stampede, the Juno Awards, Global Festival of Stars and Tour of Tokyo.

I ask the girls if they hold any regular music practices.

"We're supposed to! That was our goal..." Alex laughs.

"We have to be in the mood to practice," Andrea continues, smiling.

"But sometimes we spontaneously start to jam and dance in our kitchen," Aleisha says. We all start to giggle.

The restaurant is starting to sound and feel like a huge slumber party. Talking, laughing and chit-chat fill the room.

Balancing a music career, friends, sports and work must be difficult. Alexandra, who graduated last spring, has postponed university. "I hope to start in the fall of 2008. Maybe education, but I don't know," she says.

To the girls, high school has always come first. Aleisha, who graduates this year, is planning on taking a transfer program at Edmonton's Grant MacEwen College for her bachelor of arts, then going on to take a bachelor of education, with hopes of becoming an elementary school teacher. "I hope to teach art and music," she says.

The girls' favourite subjects vary. Andrea loves art and science because she's good at it. Alexandra loved English while she was in high school, and Aleisha likes social studies and English. "I have the coolest teachers," Aleisha explains.

Almost all shows and concerts are scheduled for weekends, so they don't interfere with homework. Planning shows, concerts, press interviews and travel arrangements is up to Mom and Dad.



"Our goal is to stay true to ourselves,"
Alexandra says.

"Most of the summer is taken up with our shows and travels," Aleisha says. It's a wonder that they don't fight more, with all that togetherness. "Sometimes we fight over the computer," she offers. The other two nod, agreeing about the source of disagreement. The sisters are best friends.

I wonder if their talent is genetic.

"Our parents aren't musical," Andrea says. "The only thing our mom does is tap dance in the grocery store to embarrass us," Aleisha does a mini demo, feet slapping the floor under the table. We all burst into laughter.

"But we love our family," Alexandra says through spits of laughter. I'm still laughing hard enough that I almost knock over my now empty rice bowl as I reach for my water.

When the sisters aren't on stage they enjoy just being teenagers, and have regular hobbies.

They all enjoy reading novels and non-fiction. "I'm so excited! I just got my library card," Andrea exclaims. The girls also love to just hang out and rent movies.

"Before we came to meet you we watched *Hairspray*," Alex says.

On the horizon, the Vissia Sisters hope to release a full-length CD. "Maybe by next spring," Alexandra says. Some folk festivals might be in the future for the sisters, but for now, they live each day as it comes. "Our goal is to stay true to ourselves," Alexandra says. Real talent and wise words come from the smiling girls sitting across from me. But surely they want more ordinary things, too.

"What do you want for Christmas?" I ask them.

"I want straight teeth," Andrea is the first to answer. "I really want my braces off. Also an 80-gigabyte iPod would be cool too."

Aleisha's next with: "An iPod touch would be cool but something realistic... probably a Chapters gift card."

I look at Alexandra. "Umm... a Mac Book Pro laptop would be nice but I'm most excited about my boyfriend coming home." I feel like I've been having lunch with friends; the sisters are so real and wonderful. Then the waitress swoops in and starts taking away our sticky plates.

Just like that, another amazing performance by the Vissia Sisters is over. It always seems too short.

As we get ready to leave, I ask what the hardest thing about their busy schedule is. The girls look at each other and think. Of course there's the social aspect, missing their friends and family.

"The worst thing for me is when my sisters take my clothes!" Alexandra says with a smirk. A-ha! They do fight about the regular teenage things.

She looks her sisters over and says, "It's a miracle they are actually wearing their own clothes today." They verify their own clothes and agree. □

What's on the Vissia sister's iPod:

New Slang... The Shins

Rain... Patty Griffin

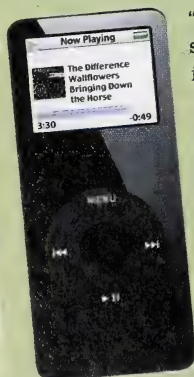
Nine Crimes... Damien Rice

Rilo Kiley... Silver Lining

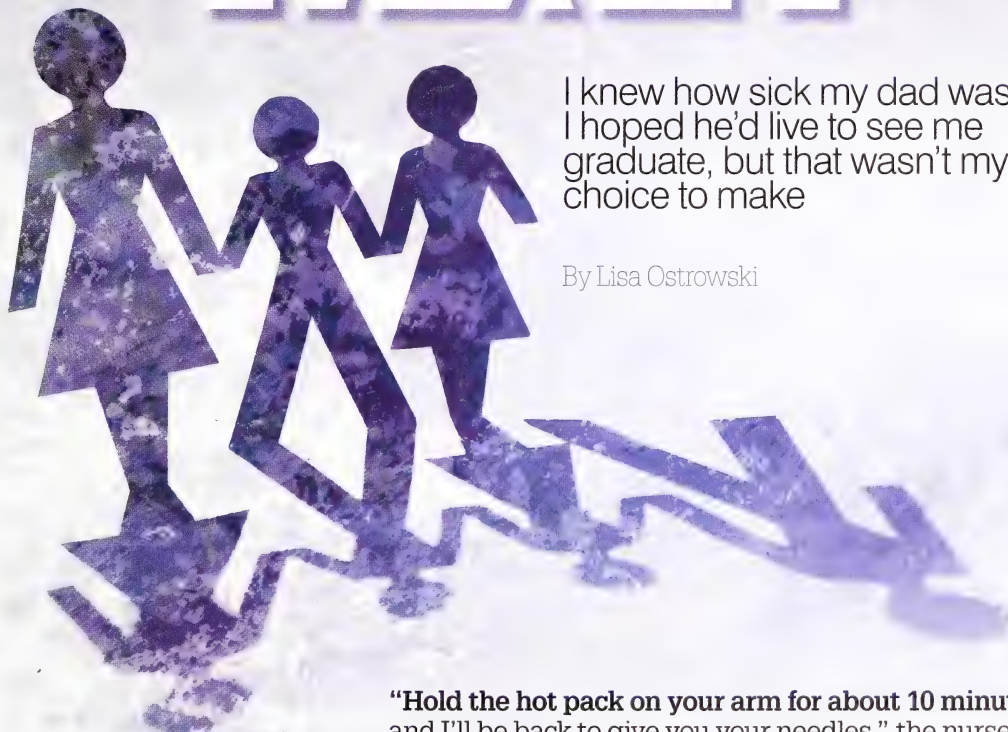
Fidelity... Regina Spektor

Better... Regina Spektor

Not Too Late... Norah Jones



The Missing MAN



I knew how sick my dad was. I hoped he'd live to see me graduate, but that wasn't my choice to make

By Lisa Ostrowski

"Hold the hot pack on your arm for about 10 minutes, and I'll be back to give you your needles," the nurse says to my dad. She smiles at me and hands me a hot pack too. I don't need it, but my hands are kind of cold from the February weather.

"Ah well, another treatment down today, that's good," I smile at him, "Be positive! Right?" This is our typical Saturday morning.

"Right kiddo. How about we go grab some food after this?"



He wasn't **invincible**,
I **knew** that, but nothing
that **bad** was going to
happen to **him**.
For a **while** I was **right**

"Sounds good. Maybe some bagels?"

I'd like that a lot."

"I'd like that too."

Over time, my dad would develop a flavour aversion to the meals we'd get on Saturdays after his chemotherapy. His reactions varied from week to week, but I got used to that. We bonded over the course of his chemotherapy. Strange how something so upsetting can bring people together.

Grade 12 is supposed to be one of the most eventful and enjoyable years of high school. Mine was eventful, but it was also very stressful and painful. The death of a parent is something I would never wish upon any young person. Death is part of life, but that doesn't make it any easier to handle.

As a child, my family was the most important thing. I'd been raised by two wonderful parents who took time out of their busy schedules to accommodate my sister and me as we were growing up. I grew up thinking that I knew my family, and I knew where I stood. There was an order to my family; despite my rebellious tendencies as a teenager I know now that my parents were only doing what was best for me. I knew that I needed their guidance. My father kept my older sister and me on track.

I was always a bit of a "daddy's girl," which is why I had such a difficult time when he first got cancer when I was in Grade 8. At first, I thought nothing of it. My father and I were always close, and I knew he was tough. He was a big, strong guy. He wasn't invincible, I knew that, but nothing that bad was going to happen to him. For a while I was right. He beat the first appearances of cancer but everyone in my family knew that there was more to being healthy than just getting rid of cancer. The treatments would have to continue in order to prevent future occurrences.

He started preventive treatments for his cancer and we started our Saturday routine. We'd wake up, go to the hospital and he'd get a hot pack to place on his arm and too many needles to count. I loved this time together, but it was also one of the most difficult things I have ever had to go through. I watched my father go from a strong, healthy, intelligent man to someone that I didn't know.

In Grade 11, things got worse. The cancer came back, and it had spread. For several

months he said nothing to my sister or me about this, and then one day, as we were driving, he decided it was time to tell me.

"The doctors tell me I'm going to be on chemotherapy for the rest of my life."

I cried and cried and my eyes felt like they were burning. I had only seen my dad cry once before this, but we were both a mess, crying on our way into another treatment.

"How long do you have left?" I mumbled in between sobs.

"I don't know... They don't know. Anywhere from one month to a few years."

The idea devastated me. I was crushed by the thought of my father not seeing me graduate, not seeing me get into university or get married. But I had no choice. This was not my decision to make, and I could do nothing to make him get better.

Over the next year, I learned to deal with my dad's illness again, as his condition worsened and he was checked in and out of the hospital. Each time he was readmitted, I told myself that it was going to be OK, that he had several years left. But he was a shadow of his former self. He was always tired, and he had lost more than 100 pounds. He rarely spoke anymore and most of his hair was gone. It hurt me so much to see someone that I loved and admired so much in so much pain that I just tried to ignore it. Graduation was only a couple of months away, and I knew at the very least he'd be around for that.

At the beginning of May he was hospitalized again. My grad was in two weeks, and I couldn't imagine not having him there. I cried daily, and did everything I thought would help get him out of the hospital.

The day before my cap and gown ceremony, he was released. He would be able to come to my grad, but he would have to bring an oxygen tank. As I crossed the stage that night, I looked out and saw him sitting there. I was overwhelmed with a mixture of joy and sadness. He was smiling and clapping but he was tired, I could tell. He was readmitted to the hospital that night.

The next night was the grad banquet, the event for which every girl spends way too much money on a dress and hairstyle and every guy tries to find the best looking suit. I got my hair and makeup done, and got into my dress but I didn't feel right. I spent my

There was **sadness everywhere:** an **empty** chair at the dinner **table**, and even his **shoes** in the **closet**.

entire night worrying about my father. I was destroyed that he wasn't there.

The next day, I visited him in the hospital. His face was gaunt and there was sadness in his eyes. I'd brought a video camera to my grad the night before and I wanted to show him everything that he missed. We only got about 10 minutes into the film before he looked over at me and sighed.

"I'm sorry, Lis, but I can't finish watching this."

I watched him fall asleep and I felt helpless as I sat there. His tiny limbs were outlined through the blanket, and his mouth fell open as he slept. My father was fading away in front of my eyes.

I finished exams and started spending as much time as I could at the hospital. Just after my high school years ended, my father passed away with our family at his side.

Things haven't been the same since. My family really struggled for some time to figure out what to do without the man who had guided us to this point. My mother, my sister and I dealt with our grief differently. The first year after his death was very difficult. There was sadness everywhere I went: an empty chair at the dinner table, his cologne sitting in the bathroom, even his shoes in the closet reminded me of the new "family" that I had to adjust to. We were all still family, but we were all unsure of how to act, of what to do without my dad there.

The one word to describe the first few months after my father's death is confusion. I didn't know what to do with myself. My family was torn apart; even though we were all going through the same thing, I felt really alone. The range of emotions we went through that first year after his death was astounding. Sometimes we still have trouble coping with our loss, two years later, but every day is a little better.

I miss my father so much, and the only thing that I feel like I can do is live the way he would have wanted me to. Somehow it has seemed like the best way to keep my dad's memory alive is to make him proud. Life goes on, and I have to keep going too. So I live with the values he taught me, and in a strange way, I want to be just like him when I grow up.

I know I'm not the only one to have lost a parent, and I know that the situation and the way to deal with it changes from person to person. I was lucky to have had my father around until I was 18; many other people haven't been so fortunate.

I know it hasn't been easy, but no matter how lonely I felt, I was never alone. My friends and family were always there for me, but there were other support networks available to me as well. So even though this has been one of the most difficult times of my life, I've gotten through it.

Life keeps going, and every day gets a little bit easier.

If you need support

There are lots of resources to call on if you are facing the illness or loss of a loved one due to cancer. Here are some good places to start:

- Tom Baker Cancer Centre, Calgary (403) 521-3553 or 521-3922. Get in touch with a social worker to access support services
- Cross Cancer Institute, Edmonton (780) 432-8703. Individual and group counselling is available for cancer patients and families
- The Alberta Cancer Board website has a listing of Community Cancer Centres in other parts of Alberta. www.cancerboard.ab.ca

THIS IS ASHLEY BART

For this SAIT student, life does anything but drag

By Stephanie Smith Photograph by Ewan Nicholson

In the world of Canadian drag racing, where the smell of burning rubber and the sound of roaring engines reign supreme, female drivers are rare.

But quite close to home, there's a first-year college student literally burning up the tracks. Ashley Bart is the only female drag racer in Canada to have obtained a top alcohol licence – a feat quite worth the time she has put into her hobby-turned-passion.

Ashley was born in Saskatoon, which was where she started racing snowmobiles at age eight. In Grade 5, she moved to small-town High River, Alberta, where she graduated from Notre Dame Collegiate High School in June 2007. (Currently, she is studying to become a paralegal at SAIT, and hopes to one day study law.)

At 10, Ashley raced a junior dragster, a scale model of a real car for kids between eight and 16. At 16, she moved to a super comp dragster. Now, she races a top alcohol car, which burns alcohol rather than other fuel.

"I won my first race when I was eight, and ever since then I've been hooked," Ashley says. "Drag racing was an oppor-

tunity presented to me, and I took it, and have pursued it from there."

Ashley has the racing bug in her genes. She's the third-generation racer for Bart Family Racing, started in the 1970s by Jackie Bart, Ashley's grandmother. Ashley's father, Rick Bart, is a racer too. All three have national titles.

When the Bart family purchased a super comp rear engine dragster in 2004, Rick raced it while his daughter trained with her junior dragster. He handed over driving rights to Ashley in 2005 and became her crew chief, which includes monitoring everything from engine tuning to the weather.

The regular drag racing season lasts from the end of May until September or October. Ashley describes it as an acceleration contest from a standing start between two side-by-side vehicles over a measured distance. But it's more complicated than simply putting the pedal to the metal when the light turns green.

"I compete in a style of drag racing called a heads-up race," Ashley

explains. This means whoever crosses the finish line first wins. But, in order to start a race, you have to do a burnout to make sure the tires are hot and sticky to provide traction. Then, you stage the car, moving ahead to break a light beam to tell the other driver you're ready. As soon as both cars are staged, drivers see a flash of yellow, followed by a flash of green to start the race. "Races are won and lost at the starting line," Ashley says.

But wanna-be racers can't just strap themselves into a car and go either – it takes a lot of physical, mental and mechanical preparation. "Drag racing is a sport that consists of major concentration and focus. Focus is the key ability to racers," Ashley says. "Also, it's good to stay in shape – you need strength to control a car that powerful."

And then there's the safety factor.

"I wear a 20-layer fire retardant Nomex suit so I won't burn if there is a fire, a helmet, certified racing boots and gloves and a safety device called an R3, which protects my neck and spinal cord," she says.





"There is nothing exposed besides my eyes,"

The car gets equal attention. "Mechanically, there's a ton of work to be done on these types of cars during the season and even in the winter to get them ready for next year.

Her father, Rick, agrees. "In races, those cars are just tortured. Engines are taken apart every year after the season and rebuilt to be kept in perfect shape," he says. "Tune-ups are done every weekend. You need to keep an eye on the tire wear, the engine tuning, everything. Safety is the number one concern."

The National Hot Rod Association changes rules and regulations to make people safer. The cockpit is designed for strength and safety. It has lots of padding, a five-point harness and arm restraints, plus all the safety gear the drivers wear.

Drag racing comes with some considerable perks. In April 2007, Ashley travelled to Gainesville, Florida, to the Frank Hawley School of Drag Racing, a professional racing school. She was there with a mission: to learn as much as she could and gain some driving experience from world-renowned teachers. She walked away with a top alcohol licence.

"When people try for a top alcohol licence, there is only about a five per cent success rate on your first try, because these cars are considered some of the hardest to drive," Ashley explains. "A top alcohol car can reach speeds of 270 mph in a matter of 5.4 seconds. They are the biggest adrenaline rush in the world!"

A bigger surprise came when Ashley became the first female drag racer in Canada with a top alcohol licence. Her best time in the three-day course was a 5.9 second pass going 232 mph. Her best super comp time, an 8.24 second pass going 166 mph, seems ridiculously slow to Ashley now.

"I was given the chance to go, so I went to try to get my top alcohol licence. I had the mindset that this would be a great opportunity to learn. When I actually obtained the licence, I was ecstatic. It was on my first try too."

"We never expected Ashley to get her top

"It's all fun and games until you get beat by a girl."

alcohol licence," her dad says. "That wasn't the main goal. We just wanted to learn more about drag racing from one of the most decorated racers in the world. We didn't think Ashley would progress as fast as she did, but she surprises us all the time," he says.

Ashley has won three national titles and refers to them as "the Stanley Cup of drag racing" – in Ashcroft, B.C., Medicine Hat and Calgary. Also, in the 2006 Calgary Drag Racing Association year-end banquet, Ashley was awarded a second place finishing in the '06 season and Rookie of the Year.

What sets her apart is her formidable perfect reaction time. A "perfect reaction time" is when the car leaves the starting line at the exact moment the light changes – this reaction is usually measured in thousandths of a second. In Rick's career, he has had one perfect reaction time. Ashley has had eight already.

Still, in Ashley's 11 years of burning rubber, she has been put down and mocked by other competitors. She says it comes with the territory.

"When I first moved into bigger cars after I received my valid driver's licence, some people started a petition saying I shouldn't be allowed to race the cars because I was too tiny and wasn't strong enough to muscle the cars. I had to

go and tell them I passed all the safety tests and earned my licence like everyone else" she says.

"Also, I was up at a race in Edmonton one year, and this guy from the States came up to me and yelled and cursed at me for being a girl in a 'man's sport.' If anything, though, these experiences make me a better racer and make me more determined to prove them wrong. The best part about drag racing is when guys tell me I shouldn't be doing this and then I turn around and beat them in a race."

For Rick, the best thing about drag racing is seeing Ashley going down the track. "I love to watch her race. I love watching her from behind the car as much as I love being in the car. I can escape from the stresses of the world. And we are so family-oriented about drag racing. We all love it."

Ashley's dream is to be picked up by a pro team and race professionally in the National Hot Rod Association's Powerade series. It helps that Kenny Gilmour Motorsports is sponsoring Ashley to race in the top alcohol class for the 2008 season.

"Since Ashley races two cars, the super comp for Bart Family Racing and the Top Alcohol dragster for Kenny Gilmour, now we have a mix of sponsors. For Bart Family Racing, we mostly have support from local companies. It includes everything from monetary assistance to products. Since Kenny Gilmour Motorsports is professional, there is more national sponsorship," says Rick.

Though she's met with tremendous success, Ashley is just excited to be doing so well. "Drag racing is my life, no doubt," she says. "It's a time when I can just get away from everything and not have to worry about anything besides what's happening on the track. It's taught me about family, friendship, sportsmanship and working hard to get where you want to be. Whatever you do, don't give up, people are going to say no, and you have to keep on striving to get something you really want. I love to see women and girls do well in this sport."

Most of us will leave the heart-pounding, nail-biting, I-left-my-stomach-at-the-starting-line adrenaline rush to Ashley. Like she says: "It's all fun and games until you get beat by a girl." ■

You can learn more about Bart Family Racing at their website:
www.bartfamilyracing.com

**Sometimes a positive frame of mind and
a strong sense of self is tough to keep up.
Here's how to mind your mood**

18 WAYS TO BEAT THE BLUES

By Allison McPhail

We've hurtled through the worst of the long, dark winter with its holiday stresses, muddy streets and outbreaks of the flu. It all has a way of bearing down on the spirits. And now we have to face that in-between seasonal lull, still coping with cold and waiting for spring. Sometimes this is the worst time of year.

We talked to some teens and uncovered some useful tips for cheering yourself up if you find you're feeling a little down.

1

Go see a play or some improvisation:

Theatre always provides a sense of magic, and it's a warm place to get you out of the house. To catch an improv show, head to the Loose Moose Theatre in Calgary or Rapid Fire Theatre in Edmonton. See www.loosemoose.com and www.rapidfiretheatre.com. If you can't afford theatre, or don't have access, try renting or borrowing some classic stand up comedy.

2

Have a theme party: Everyone enjoys dressing up now and then, especially if there's a creative theme. Look up different holidays and other special days that happen in February and March and build a party around one of them. Examples: National Flag of Canada Day is February 15. Have your guests wear red and white and serve back bacon, popcorn and butter tarts. Or how about a Commonwealth Day party on the second Monday in March? Guests can represent, and bring a dish from, different Commonwealth countries.

3

Volunteer at a soup kitchen or animal shelter:

Helping others is an excellent way of easing your own melancholy. Choose if you would prefer a smile and a thank you from a person or a grateful tail wagging from a dog. "Just being near dogs makes me feel good," says Sherwood Park teen Mark Tkachuk.

Take a bubble bath – with candles and music!

A warm bath will ease the chill and help you to unwind. This luxury is not restricted to girls, so grab your bubbles and boats, boys! Tkachuk says he supports the idea because he is a big fan of bubbles – aren't we all?

5

Call a friend you haven't talked to in awhile: Catching up with an old pal is always heart-warming.

6

Hug something soft: Hugging can cheer people up instantly. Well, maybe not, but Jasper teen Hillary Amann says it's always good. Cuddly pets are especially great for mood boosting.

Sing along to your iPod – out

loud and in public: Admit it, we all enjoy singing. The reason most of us only do it in the shower is because we're afraid of embarrassing ourselves, but that makes a pretty weak excuse. Go ahead and enjoy yourself, you're sure to feel better for it.

8

Chocolate:

'Nuff said.

Tell jokes with friends:

Laughter is actually scientifically proven to improve people's moods. So why don't we do it more often? Jokes are a great way to bond, and you'll be surprised how fast the time flies. See if your local library has *Humor 101: How to Tell Jokes for Power, Prestige, Profit, and Personal Fulfillment*. It's a 2003 book by comedian Danny Murphy.

10

Watch classic Disney movies with your family:

Cuddle up on the couch with some popcorn and hot chocolate and experience the simple pleasure of happily ever after. "Plus, family time is always important," Tkachuk says.

Buy yourself a treat: Don't forget about yourself while you're being generous! A little indulgence can go a long way. Amann jokingly calls this "retail therapy."

"Buying something, even as simple as a coffee, makes me feel better instantly," she says. Of course, while setting aside some "me" time for a quiet cup of coffee is nice, consumerism isn't a cure.

7

12

Buy someone a gift for no

reason: Getting may be nice, but we all know giving touches the heart more.

13

Go tobogganing with friends: The exertion stimulates endorphins, the feel-good hormones, while you have some good old-fashioned fun before the snow's gone to create new memories with pals. "And we all love going fast," Tkachuk says. Relax by the fire afterwards, cooking s'mores. Enjoy it because spring is nearly here.

14

Finger paint: It's the simple things in life that bring the greatest pleasure. When was the last time you got your fingers all goopy? It lets you tap into your creativity too.

15

Make a silly face: We all need to laugh at ourselves once in awhile, and this is by far the most amusing way to do it. "Making silly faces can also feel therapeutic," Amann says.

16

Do something you've never

done before: From playing a new instrument to public speaking, you can't beat the feeling of accomplishment that comes from mastering a new task or the thrill of first trying.

17

Do something familiar: Reread a favourite book or hang with your best friend.

18

Build a snowman while

you can: Snow isn't nearly as depressing when you're playing in it! When the snow's all gone, plan a flower garden.

X

GRIP X-PRESS AWARDS

Grip magazine and the Alberta Mental Health Board handed out **prizes** for the first annual **Grip X-Press Awards** at a **glam awards gala** at the Westin Hotel in Edmonton, on January 17. Our judges had the tough job of selecting **winners** from among more than **160** dazzling entries.

Winners received a prize of a **laptop** (in the case of the writing categories), and a digital SLR **camera** (for the visual arts category). **One** winner will be **selected** for a highly prestigious **internship** at Venture Publishing, providing an **opportunity** to further develop his or her **talents**, working alongside **Grip** magazine's **creative** team.

See the winning entries in the following pages and **check** out honourable mentions at **www.griponline.ca**

GRIP X-PRESS AWARDS

Best non-fiction article

WINNER: THE DOUGHNUT BURGER: A FIGHT FOR FAT

By Scaachi Koul

Oftentimes, I stand before my refrigerator during dinner time, thinking of what I could eat, indecisive but starving. Not only am I craving a hearty meal, I'm impatient for dessert. I then remember a creation perfect for the situation.

Enter: The doughnut burger.

From the moment Christopher Sell created the deep fried Twinkie, we've been searching for ways to guide the evolution of good food. We've never had luck putting together the perfect meal to make something outstanding – until now. The Gateway Grizzlies of the Frontier Baseball League, a minor league baseball team in Sauget, Illinois, have officially created what could be the solution to not only North America's lack of the immaculate meal, but perhaps, world hunger.

The doughnut burger combines the orgasmic calories of a BLT with cheese, along with the satisfying lard of an original glazed Krispy Kream doughnut. Our society is finally advanced enough to combine beef and doughnuts in one.

This combination of beef, bacon, and glazed dough packs the satisfying punch of 45 grams

of fat and 1,000 calories. Tony Funderburg, the general manager of the Gateway Grizzlies, described the doughnut burger's best qualities, boasting that at \$4.50, it's a bargain since it's a meal and dessert in one.

The tastes of the burger are indescribable. I can take the entire mélange into my mouth, rolling the sugary-doughy-cheesy-salty amalgam side to side. I then remember I'm a vegetarian, but the damage is done. I'm hooked.

It's about time. It's outrageously frustrating having to eat dinner and dessert in two separate meals. That's two times the number of chews. How much time do you think I have? I have homework! I have responsibilities!

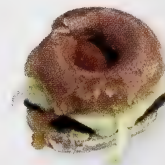
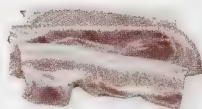
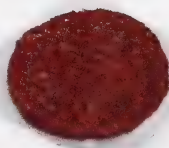
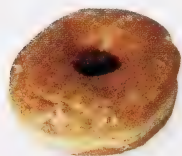
But the burger isn't solely affecting the time it takes for us to eat. The new-found delicacy is the first to spark such a fire over healthy food. Since years before its leap for corpulence, society had been trying to brush off the tyrannous rule of health. From chocolate covered pretzels to marshmallows dipped in caramel, we've been waiting for something like this to

prove to the world, "We're here. We're glut-tonous. We're keeping the Blue Cross in business."

Due to this new invention, a food revolution cannot be far off. We can shake off the oppression that fresh fruits and vegetables have had over us for centuries, and succumb to being the morbidly obese country we've always dreamed of. Finally, there may be a day where we no longer eat in moderation, and can throw all cholesterol caution to the wind.

Perhaps my grandfather summarized it best. "I dream of a day when society is no longer burdened by sensibility and so-called healthy eating habits. I dream of a day when my grandchildren need to be airlifted from their homes since they no longer fit through the door. I dream of a day when my grandchildren die soon thereafter due to their tremendous and overpowering girth!"

Well, Grandpa, to you, there's only one thing I can say, "VIVE LA REVOLUTION!"



JUDGES' COMMENTS:

A highly original entry with a humorous tone that suits the topic very well. Scaachi Koul has developed a strong sense of irony in the piece, and "The Doughnut Burger" has good descriptive prose.

HONORABLE MENTIONS:

BRIDGING THE GAP: IS A GAP YEAR RIGHT FOR YOU?
by Stephanie Jones

THE DEAD DON'T BUY
by Samantha Marcellin

ACCOMMODATING RELIGIOUS PRACTICES
by Allison Render

Best short story or poetry

WINNER: AN ABSTRACT CONCEPT

By Vivian Lee

The kitchen was an off white, illuminated by warm orange lights. The table I sat beside was strewn with scraps of paper and pens.

The thin wail of a kettle on the stove pierced the soft quiet. Painstakingly, grandma braced herself against the table and stood up. She toddled to the stove and removed the kettle. After pouring herself a cup of hot water, she slowly walked back, settled into her seat, and smiled at me.

"What word would you like to learn next, little girl?"

"Show me how to write 'cake', grandma," I spoke in stilted Cantonese. Her eyes, black pools, sparkled, and her thin lips curved into an impish smile.

"Well, watch closely then." She seized the pen with shaking hands and, slowly, made each deliberate stroke for the Chinese characters for "cake."

I watched her hands. Sandpaper hands that could grasp mine in a vice grip while navigating icy streets. They made me remember her sad stories.

She dropped the pen and made a satisfied sound.

"There. Now, you try." I picked up the pen, slowly copying. I watched her out of the corner

of my eye watching me, her head bobbing in approval.

"Good. Write it at least 10 times." Sighing, she leaned back in her seat, hands in her lap. Dressed in an old crimson sweater, she seemed to be thinking of some thing or place far away.

I wrote quickly and then turned to her. "Grandma," I said, feeling like I was calling from a distance. I patted her hands and she looked at me.

"Grandma, can you teach me how to write the word 'dog' in Chinese?"

She positively crowed, "Of course!" Seizing the pen she shakily began. I waited in the silence, in the warm orange glow. She started shaking her head.

"No, no. That's not how it goes. Oh, dear. Oh, dear."

Immediately I placed my hand on her arm. "What is it, Grandma?"

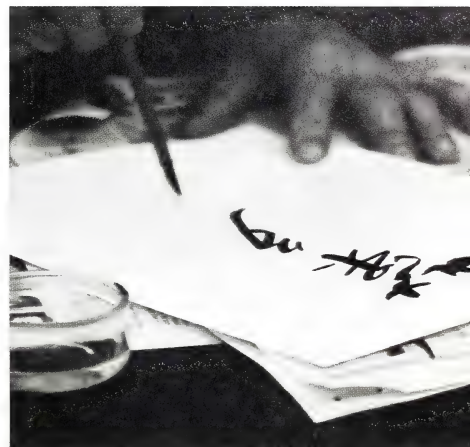
"I don't remember. I can't remember."

I smiled gently. "It's a hard word, I bet."

She nodded slowly. "It is. It is." She paused. "What is your name, pretty girl?" "Yeung Shing, Grandma."

"Oh."

I looked at the white page, then up at her face. She was somewhere far away again.



It was pitch black outside the window.

Reflected in the glass was an old woman and a young girl, side by side. The old woman had her eyes closed. She seemed at utter peace. Between the two of them was a table strewn with papers and two generations of time. A history communicated only in the present in short, stilted Cantonese. The rest of the kitchen was shrouded in shadows.

I wanted to remind the old woman in the glass that the cup of water beside her was getting cold. I wanted that young girl to ask her what she was thinking of. But I just watched them, sitting in that orange dimness, and then I went back to copying characters.

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

This short story is written with a great deal of skill and confidence. It contains amazing imagery and mature insight. Subtle details help create the scene for the reader, and add depth in a concise and highly effective prose. The author has a cultural sensitivity that is combined with a delightful writing style. She displays wisdom beyond her youth, and a grasp of the gap between age and culture.

HONORABLE MENTIONS:

CATERPILLARS AND BUTTERFLIES
by Megan Ryland

BURN THE MONA LISA
by Jay Ritchie

I TOOK THE DRUG
by Adam Kolacz

UNBROKEN
by Maria Milanowski

LAST TRIP
by Julie Peter

UNSPOKEN
by Dennis Littlechild

GRIP X-PRESS AWARDS

Best photograph or illustration

WINNER: UNTITLED

By Michelle Truong



JUDGES' COMMENTS:

This picture has good balance, strong composition and is wonderfully lit. Michelle Truong has made ordinary subject material interesting through careful cropping and consideration of the low lighting. It's a playful shot which successfully adds intrigue to the everyday.

HONORABLE MENTIONS:

BIRD
by Lisa Simenoff

KYLE'S SIX-FRAME CROOKED GRIND
by Adam Kolacz

AUGUST PICS
by Shenese Prefontaine

UNHOOKED
by Cailey Buye

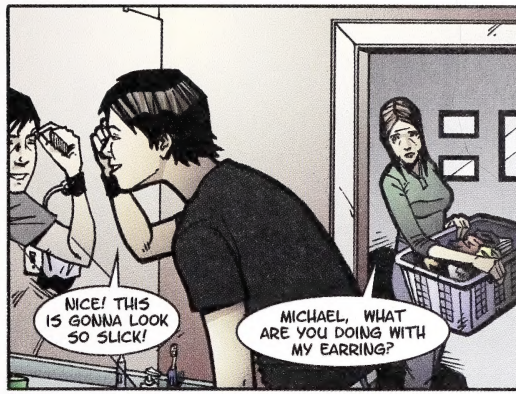
IONA21
by Charmaine Eerkes

UNTITLED
by Roisin Mcelhatton



DODGE

- ILLUSTRATED BY ERIC GRAVEL -



NICE! THIS IS GONNA LOOK SO SLICK!

MICHAEL, WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH MY EARRING?



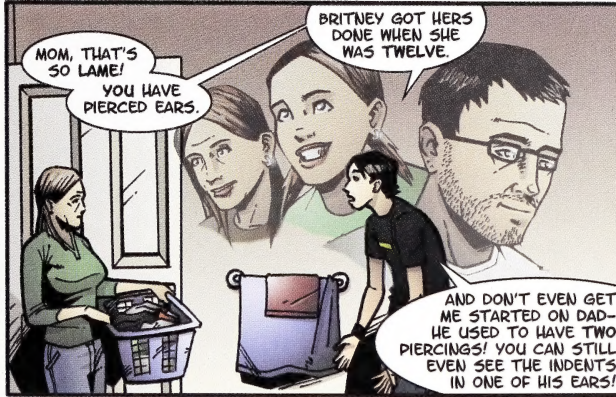
MOM! WELL... I WAS JUST CHECKING OUT HOW... HOW IT'S GONNA LOOK AFTER I GET MY EYEBROW PIERCED.

UM... I WAS GONNA ASK YOU AND DAD AFTER DINNER BUT...

...SURPRISE!



I THOUGHT WE TALKED ABOUT THIS BEFORE. NO PIERCINGS OR TATTOOS UNTIL YOU'RE EIGHTEEN, MICHAEL. YOU'RE SEVENTEEN! CAN'T YOU JUST WAIT ONE MORE YEAR?



MOM, THAT'S SO LAME! YOU HAVE PIERCED EARS.

BRITNEY GOT HERS DONE WHEN SHE WAS TWELVE.

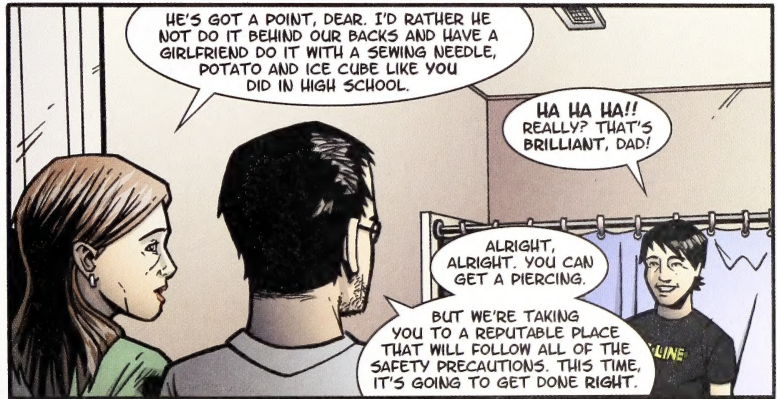
AND DON'T EVEN GET ME STARTED ON DAD- HE USED TO HAVE TWO PIERCINGS! YOU CAN STILL EVEN SEE THE INDENTS IN ONE OF HIS EARS!



THAT MAY BE TRUE, MIKE, BUT I GOT RID OF THEM BEFORE YOU WERE BORN- THAT SORT OF THING JUST DOESN'T FLY IN THE CORPORATE WORLD.



SO WHERE'S THE PROBLEM? I CAN ALWAYS TAKE IT OUT JUST LIKE YOU DID. IT'S NOT LIKE IT'S A TATTOO- LIKE I'D HAVE IT FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE.



HE'S GOT A POINT, DEAR. I'D RATHER HE NOT DO IT BEHIND OUR BACKS AND HAVE A GIRLFRIEND DO IT WITH A SEWING NEEDLE, POTATO AND ICE CUBE LIKE YOU DID IN HIGH SCHOOL.

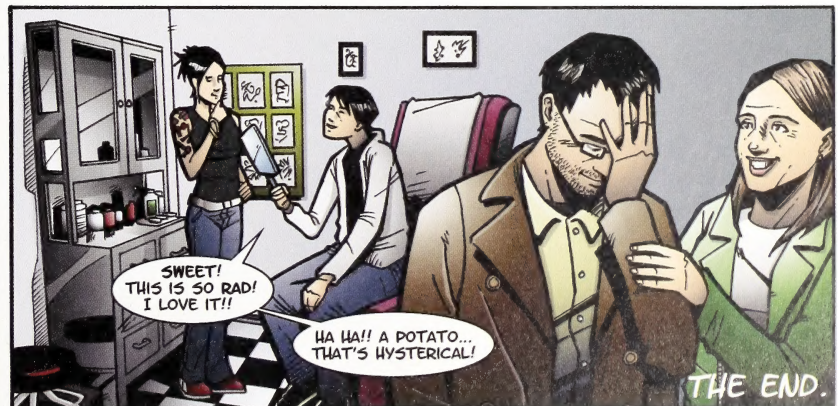
HA HA HA!! REALLY? THAT'S BRILLIANT, DAD!

ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT. YOU CAN GET A PIERCING.

BUT WE'RE TAKING YOU TO A REPUTABLE PLACE THAT WILL FOLLOW ALL OF THE SAFETY PRECAUTIONS. THIS TIME, IT'S GOING TO GET DONE RIGHT.



LATER...



SWEET! THIS IS SO RAD! I LOVE IT!!

HA HA!! A POTATO... THAT'S HYSTERICAL!

THE END.

Life in the Fruit Bowl

Who's to say that an apple is always an apple?
Sometimes it's a banana

By Paige Parsons



I imagine you're a piece of fruit. Imagine someone is sorting all the different kinds of fruit into boxes. There are separate boxes for bananas, apples, oranges, grapes, strawberries, peaches, cherries and kiwis, but for some reason, the sorter never picks you. It's because you're one freaky looking piece of fruit. You are oblong, speckled, attached to a vine, and striped purple, yellow and green. You're a hybrid, showing the characteristics of lots of fruit, and it's hard to say which one you're most like. That's the best way I can describe myself when it comes to high school stereotypes.

Often, teenagers are sorted like fruit. You can be a jock, nerd, prep, punk, skater, art kid, loner, party kid, Goth, hick, emo, religious kid... For the most part, people can categorize us as one of the various fruits in the high school orchard, but there are exceptions. Some kids can be classified under two stereotypes, like a jock/party kid or a punk/art kid; this is where you end up with fruits like banapples and kiwiberries. Then there are the floaters.

I happen to fall into this category. I'm the freak fruit. If I tried to piece together an identity for myself, I would say I am a jock/nerd/prep/party kid/artist/loner/hick. My mother refers to me as "a compartment kid" because I generally keep the different aspects of my life separate.

People usually see only one side of me. My ringette teammates probably don't realize that I run student council meetings, and when I show up at a party, my friends might not guess that

I just came from the library. Sometimes I slip up. I've had some weird looks from my sporty friends, who aren't the most avid readers, when I gush about Jane Austen.

One day, after a student council meeting, I was discussing the merits of the rubber band method of castration for bull calves with a fellow farm kid. I turned around to find a number of the other council members with a mixed look of disgust and bewilderment on their faces. As it turned out, many of them had no idea that steers existed, let alone what method farmers use to make them steers. For the most part, I manage to keep all the compartments of my life in order, but there are times when my extracurricular schedule gets to be too much.

There've been days when I feel like a sad Cheez-Whiz kid, spread too thinly over a Ritz cracker. I have found that the best way to deal with this is to try and spend my time only doing the things that I'm passionate about, and not worry too much about what others think.

There's so much more to me than meets the eye, and now I realize that perhaps I've been ignorant when it comes to stereotyping other teens. Who am I to assume that the football player in my math class isn't an aspiring opera singer?

Every person has complicated situations and commitments in their life that most people know nothing about. The trick is to find out what makes you happy and stick with it. Perhaps I was wrong about the way fruit is sorted.

Maybe everyone is a unique and multicoloured, freaky looking piece of fruit. ■

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